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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

BEING FEMINIST: LIVING WITH A MAN

by

HEATHER CLARE BAIN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Educational Psychology

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1986

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(SIGNED) Heather C. Bain

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

7675 - 89 Avenue,
Edmonton, Alberta
T6C 1N2

DATED November 21, 1985

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled BEING FEMINIST: LIVING WITH A MAN submitted by HEATHER CLARE BAIN in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

W Hohenadel

Supervisor

Rosemary Leckie

Allison Vander Well

Douglas Cullen

R A Jarrell

Lorette K. Dorlay

External Examiner

Date November 21, 1985

Liking Men

It's time to like men again. Where shall we begin?

I have a personal preference for the backs of necks, because of the word *nape*, so lightly furred; which is different from the word *scruff*. But for most of us, especially the beginners, it's best to start with the feet and work up. To begin with the head and all it contains would be too suddenly painful. Then there's the navel, birth dimple, where we fell from the stem, something we have in common; you could look at it and say, He also is mortal. But it may be too close for comfort to those belts and zippers which cause you such distress, and comfort is what you want. He's a carnivore, you're a vegetarian. That's what you have to get over.

The feet then. I give you the feet, pinkly toed and innocuous. Unfortunately you think of socks, lying on the floor, waiting to be picked up and washed. Quickly add shoes. Better? The socks are now contained, and presumably clean.

You contemplate the shoes, shined but not too much--you don't want this man to be either a messy slob or prissy--and you begin to relax. Shoes, kind and civilized, not black but a decent shade of brown. No raucous two-tones, no elevator heels. The shoes dance, with the feet in them, neatly, adroitly, you enjoy this, you think of Fred Astaire, you're beginning to like men. You think of kissing those feet, slowly, after a good scrubbing of course; the feet expand their toes, squirm with pleasure. You like to give pleasure. You run your tongue along the sole and the feet moan.

Cheered up, you start fooling around. *Footgear*, you think. Golf shoes, grassy and fatherly, white sneakers for playing tennis in, agile and sweet, quick as rabbits. Workboots, solid and trustworthy. A good man is hard to find but they do exist, you know it now. Someone who can run a chainsaw without cutting off his leg. What a relief. Checks and plaids, laconic, a little Scottish. Rubber boots, for wading out to the barn in the rain in order to save the baby calf. Power, quiet and sane. Knowing what to do, doing it well. Sexy.

But rubber boots aren't the only kind. You dont' want to go on but you can't stop yourself. Riding boots, you think, with the sinister crop; but that's not too bad, they're foreign and historical. Cowboy boots, two of them, planted apart, stomp, stomp, on main street just before the shot rings out. A spur, in the groin. A man's gotta do, but why this? Jackboots, so highly shined you can see your own face in the right one, as the left one raised itself and the heel comes down on your nose. Now you see rows of them, marching, marching; yours is the street-level view, because you are lying down. Power is the power to smash, two hold your legs, two your arms, the fifth shoves a pointed instrument into you; a bayonet, the neck of a broken bottle, and it's not even wartime, this is a park, with a children's playground, tiny red and yellow horses, it's daytime, men and women stare at you out of their closed car windows. Later the policeman will ask you what you did to provoke this. Boots were not such a bright idea after all.

But just because all rapists are men it doesn't follow that all men are rapists, you tell yourself. You try desperately to retain the image of the man you love and also like, but now it's a sand-coloured plain, no houses left standing anywhere, columns of smoke ascending, trenches filled with no quarter, heads with the faces rotting away, mothers, babies, young boys and girls, men as well, turning to skulls, who did this? Who defines *enemy*? How can you like men?

Still, you continue to believe it can be done. If not all men, at least some, at least two, at least one. It takes an act, of faith. There is his foot, sticking out from under the sheet, asleep, naked as the day he was born. The day he was born. Maybe that's what you have to go back to, in order to trace him here, the journey he took, step by step. In order to begin. Again and again.

Margaret Atwood
(Shoes & Shit, Aya Press, 1984).

Abstract

The present study investigates what it means to be a feminist and to be intimately linked with men by looking at the life-worlds of radical feminist women who choose to pursue a committed relationship with a man as lover or husband. The exploration is hermeneutical in nature. Seven feminist women of diverse biographical experience participated in hermeneutical conversations with the author. These dialogues yielded eleven conversational topics--affirmation, ambivalence, difficulty, task division, economics, sexuality, relationships with women, relationships with men, children, coming to consensus and being feminist and heterosexual--which were analyzed firstly, for themes common across participants' distinct being-in-the-world and secondly, for themes that were unique to a particular experiencing of the world. The themes brought forth within this exploration were speculatively discussed in relation to four diverse areas of theoretical writing: a) the theory of compulsory heterosexuality as outlined by Adrienne Rich, b) psychological theory and women's development as formulated by Carol Gilligan and Jean Baker Miller, c) the existential-phenomenological work of Martin Buber and Maurice Friedman, and d) radical constructivism, particularly as it is being developed by Humberto Maturana.

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Many people contributed in different ways, directly and indirectly to the fabric of this exploration. Some will be quite unaware they ever touched my life and my writing. Yet their mark lies within this text. Here I wish to acknowledge those who have been most directly a part of these pages.

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I wish, also, to thank a number of other people for their contribution to the possibility, the content and the completion of this dissertation:

My friends, who lived without me for some months, but continued to remember me, who

have always encouraged me and firmly believed in me;

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Confluence of Two Commitments

Approximately a decade of what has been coined the "second wave" of feminism is now behind us. In terms of observable, practical change it is hard to assess what has been accomplished. While the media often distorts and makes light of feminism, it has also insured that few women or men in the western world have not heard of, been touched by, reacted to some aspect of the feminist movement.

Many people equate feminism and the cry for "women's rights"--that is, equality under patriarchal law. Certainly the struggle for women's rights has been an important part of the movement, and I think it is fair to say, the major aspect of the movement prior to the 1970's. Until the 1970's, the nature of feminism tended to be issue oriented--peace, abortion, childcare, equal pay, for example--and much of the political work of feminists was constrained within the male-dominated New Left of the sixties. With an increasing awareness of our unique oppression as women, a common oppression that crosses the lines of class and extends beyond the vision of Marx, women began to organize into consciousness-raising (CR) groups. With the coming together of women to discuss our common experience, our common being-in-the-world, the second wave of feminism was born and has yielded a radical feminist praxis that is at the same time encouraging and horrifying--encouraging because we are learning to "see the world unveiled"; horrifying because we are learning what the world is, unveiled.

A feminist perspective provides a critical analysis of the subordinate status and resulting oppression of women under patriarchy, such that, in the oppression of women it is men who are the oppressors; in the conscientization of women it is the personal that is politicized; in the development of a revolutionary praxis it is individual fathers, brothers, sons, and lovers who are included in the class of men, the oppressors, the patriarchy.

The relationship between oppressed and oppressor in a revolution concerning class is generally expressed in terms of economics, in the work place. The relationships between oppressed and oppressor in a revolution concerning sexism are expressed not only in terms of economics and the workplace, but also within the family, the home, and the bedroom. In no other revolution has almost every member of the oppressed class

been affectionally and/or sexually linked with a member of the oppressing class.

> Almost all women are attached to men by one or more emotional ties, whether it be as a mother, a lover, a daughter, a sister, or a friend. Although some feminists will deny this, I have known virtually none, even among the most ardent separatists, who doesn't harbor at least a memory of some man who occupied a place of affection in her life. Though it is difficult to ignore both fear of reprisals and remembered love, feminists have learned we must harden ourselves against these feelings if we are to accomplish anything at all for women; we must agree, at least temporarily, to shove such considerations aside. (Fritz, 1979, p. 10)

Our inevitable ties with men have certainly delayed women in the penetration of our "culture of silence." Accordingly, it has been necessary for feminist women to separate from men in order to effectively unveil the patriarchal consciousness that has been imposed upon us and sedimented around us. It is always difficult to see clearly that which shapes and surrounds us, that within which we are deeply immersed. It takes an element of distance, a moving out of, a stepping back from, to provide a new perspective, to precipitate the process of reflection. In moving our position, different elements come into view. The contours of the landscape change, some being newly illuminated in sharp relief; others fading til barely discernable. It is the difference between playing the game and moving to the sidelines for a while. It is this alternating of positions, being both player and spectator, that has spawned a feminist construction of reality.

It is important for women to step back from their interactions with men for a number of reasons, not least of all to look at things with new eyes, from a different seat. Similarly, some distance has been important in enabling us to turn the spotlight on ourselves for a change. Focussing on men is a sure way not to see ourselves. Furthermore, maintaining the spotlight on women becomes imperative when men begin to grumble that their performance is inadequately lit; that it pales in comparison. Men are undoubtedly affected by the rise of women, and not always in ways they consider pleasant. Too generous a compassion for their suffering, on our part, inevitably inhibits women in the reconstruction of our world. The spotlight is pulled from us back to men and we bump into each other in the dark once again. Discussing men's problems is but a

diversion, although it may serve, in some instances, to assuage our guilt and our fear. And as feminists we all fear the fate of Lot's wife. However, as Leah Fritz states:

> when we put from our minds the consideration of how women appear in the eyes of men and how feminist decisions may affect men, it is well to remember that ambivalence toward men is still a reality for most of us. Not referring to this ambivalence is a deliberate choice. Consciousness-raising has incorporated certain rules to prevent its leading to "personal solutions." Considering men's reactions obfuscates the issue feminism strives to emphasize; the oppression of women by men, mankind, the patriarchy. When we stop agonizing over men's problems, we lift a cloud which has threatened to suffocate us--but we lift it only hypothetically. (1979, pp. 14-15)

In reality, for most of us, concern about men is still with us in some form or another. To speak about men does not deny the experience of most feminist women, but it does violate an agreed upon rule of the movement. Or it did. Now that women have begun to detail the structure and extent of our oppression by men, the early eighties has seen more feminists begin to confront our ambivalence around our affectional ties with men (e.g., Hamblin, 1983; Kates, 1982; Lazarre, 1980; Morgan, 1984).

Imagine a stage with both women and men players. The men dictate the script and act in full expression of their personhood. The women hover as shadowforms of the male cast. There comes a change of lighting, a bright focus on the shadowforms. Some of the shadows are blinded, frightened by the light and merge even closer to the shadow casters, the shadow definers, in order to hood their eyes. Others relish the light, the illumination of their shadowforms, the transformation of shadow to form. They discover their form and its relation to the shadow casters. They discover their acting, creating form and begin improvising the script of this play, initiating changes. But, of course, there are those on stage who do not want a part of this new play and they adhere strictly to the old script. They do not see women but rather, shadows in mutiny. Then there are those who play predominantly in the old play, but as looking at a figure ground form, at times they glimpse, involuntarily, the alternate picture. The alternate drama is being played off to the side of the stage, with a minority of actors. Their backs are turned to the others. There is an intensity in their movement; a knowledge that the existence of their script is somewhat

fragile, the realization that if they were to stop playing there might be no understudy waiting in the wings to replace them. There's little room to take a break; little room for a soft and gentle turn of phrase; to stop speaking loudly would mean their voices drown in the dominant script. There's little turning toward or interaction with the other side of the stage; too long a consideration of the dominant play might mean a halting or even a discarding of their alternate drama.

Some feminists would argue that the existence of a feminist construction of reality is too tenuous yet to entertain any consideration of our ambivalence towards men. There is a very legitimate fear, that in opening that question, we remove the spotlight from women and merely illuminate the world of men once again. Yet for other feminists, living intimately with a man is an aspect of our daily lived experience, and questions around our affectional ties with men, both real and immediate. With the coming together of a commitment to feminism and a commitment to an individual male lover we cannot but confront our ambivalence towards men. This dissertation asks what it means to be feminist and heterosexual. The question is situated within the feminist analysis from which it arises and it illuminates the everyday experience of women. It explores a being-in-the-world that represents the daily living situation of many women. Fundamentally this thesis is concerned with women and it maintains the spotlight upon women.

B. The Question and Its Organization

The present study[1] intends to explore what it means to be a feminist and intimately linked with men, by looking at the life-worlds of radical feminist women who are heterosexual, who choose to pursue an intimate relationship with a man as lover or

---

[1]Engaging in a research process that is relatively unfamiliar to the researcher and to her discipline, inevitably invites a noticing of language. I do not particularly like to use the word "study" to refer to this creation. For me, "study" carries connotations of hard work, of arduous endeavour. Furthermore, it implies distance and non participation on the part of the researcher, a looking-at in separation from an object. Also, it refers to a product, in its noun form, a static completion. In trying to come up with a replacement for the commonly used word "study," I wanted a concept that might embody some of the enjoyment I experienced in creating this dissertation, that would acknowledge the co-participation and accordingly, non-objectification of all participants, and that would embody the notion of process, of coming to form, as opposed to product, the cemently formed. I played with different terms--for example, exploration, investigation, discourse, reflection, contemplation, engagement, endeavour, creation--and I use each of these during the course of the text. At times I also resort to "study." However, my preferred substitute is "exploration."

husband. The nature of the question, what it means to be feminist and heterosexual, is such that it seeks a deeper understanding of the life-experiences of these feminist women; it demands insight into the women's being-in-the-world, their embeddedness in the world at the confluence of two commitments--one to a movement, the other to a man. It seeks to understand feminist immersion in the world at the point at which commitment to a revolution against the patriarchy and affectional / sexual ties with a member of the patriarchy overlap.

This discourse initiates an exploration of the subjective meaning of heterosexuality within the context of a radical feminist commitment. Its starting point is not ideology, but women's experience. Its focus is on what women actually do, how they act and react, what they feel and perceive; the joy and the pain, the ease and the difficulty, the hope and the despair, the change and the sameness of their everyday being-in-the-world.

This dissertation is born from the womb of a question--what does it mean to be a feminist and to live intimately with a man? Questions inevitably arise out of a particular context, a certain half-knowing which in turn moderates the question's direction. Chapter II provides the context for this exploration, the background to the question as it has emerged for me. It situates the question within ideas about the construction of reality in general, a feminist construction of reality in particular and heterosexual feminists' silence concerning their specific construction of reality. Chapter II speaks to the legitimacy, the relevance of the question. It answers the queries, For whom is this a question? Why does this question need to be asked anyway?

Chapter III describes how the question was asked, how the parameters of the question were explored. It unfolds a process little known within psychology, called here, the hermeneutic conversation. This process was chosen because it acknowledges the participatory aspect of coming to an answer. It allows the exploration of a relatively unchartered phenomenon without objectifying the participants, without drawing lines of separation between a questioner and her "knowledge" and respondents and their "lack of knowledge." Rather, it values the conversationalists, their individual histories and experiences. It values "not knowing" on the part of the questioner, an openness and humbleness in the face of what is revealed. It acknowledges the contribution of both questioner and respondent in the construction of the resulting "truth." And its medium is

that of dialogue such that it values talk, woman-talk, the very vehicle of women's recreation of the world.

Chapter IV presents the themes, as they emerged for me, from conversations with seven feminist, heterosexual women. The organization of this chapter has arisen from careful attention to two highly important considerations for me. The first is that of confidentiality. Without exception, these women opened intimate chambers of their souls and spoke in trust that their identities would not be revealed. In a community that is small, the slightest personal detail can reveal identity. Thus, the decision not to provide summary descriptions for each of the participants, but rather to present themes and illustrate them with a wealth of quotations. The decision to include multiple quotations came as a result of my second consideration--a desire to portray, acknowledge, and value the personal individuality, the rich and beautiful timbre of each of these women. These are ordinary women; yet they are extraordinary women. In listening and speaking with them, I came to a deep appreciation of the wealth and vividness of their experience, the penetration of their strength, the aliveness of their changing, the loving of their spirits. In paying tribute to the very wonder of these women, it is important for me that the spirit of their being-in-the-world weaves through the pages of this tapestry.

Chapter V represents a stepping back and a reflecting upon the picture that emerged from interaction with the conversationalists. Once painted, it deserves comment. Because this dissertation is exploratory, it stands initially within a particular context, but without relation to a specific literature review, the results of relevant studies. What is relevant can only be assessed after the fact, after the portrait has emerged. Thus, in chapter V, the study's themes are discussed in relation to other writings, writings from both the feminist and psychological literature. Inevitably, this chapter is also speculative. Interpretation always offers the luxury of going out on a limb, creating possibilities for some of the missing parts of the puzzle, asking more questions than one began with.

Chapter VI presents my personal reflections upon the process of my involvement in this endeavour. It outlines the importance of the engagement for me. It details the journey from an initial curiosity, an initial personal position through transformation of my individual horizons to my current construction of the world. It speaks about my changes as a result of immersion in this dissertation. It brings into view the threads of myself that

weave their way through the work, that hover in the background shaping and being shaped by the questioning, listening, reflecting and writing. It represents some of the unsaid out of which the said arises. Thus, chapter VI completes the picture, offering a glimpse of the author's being-in-the-world through the process of giving birth to this text.

II. THE CONTEXT

It has often been commented, usually by women, that women and men seem as different species, that they inhabit different worlds, are located in different realities. I say, "usually by women," because men tend not to notice the differences or if they do, not to be seriously interested in them. Robin Morgan (1984) suggests that it is the word "noticing" which captures that quality that most distinguishes women from men in this patriarchal world. Women notice; men can afford not to. We notice the slightest change in expression, the hesitation of a voice, the dirty toiletbowl, the child straying into traffic. We notice that men don't notice and we notice their reactions when we demand they do notice.

Feminist women are demanding that men notice, take heed of some of the things they notice. They are demanding that men notice an alternate reality, a women-centred construction of the world, that they pay attention to women's experience of the world. Now, what is not noticed is generally not taken to exist, to be true. What is not noticed is certainly unknown, alien. So, for a man to first stumble upon a feminist reality is much like a stranger falling upon a linguistically and culturally alien world. Except it's here, in their midst. Like the proverbial bookcase that was always just a bookcase until it was shown to be more, the entrance to a secret chamber. Noticing is sometimes a conscious choosing of perceptions also. It's pleasant to notice this, not so pleasant to notice that.

Noticing a feminist construction of the world, and continuing to take notice of it, is not always so pleasant for men. It challenges their construction of the world and makes them uncomfortable. Mixing a feminist version of reality with the dominant masculine version of reality has been likened to blending oil and water. Yet the two come together for women who are feminist and heterosexual.

A. The Construction of Reality

> While both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is (our) vocation. This vocation is constantly negated, yet it is affirmed by that very negation. It is thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression and the violence of the oppressors; it is affirmed by the yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice, and by their struggle to recover their lost humanity.

(Freire, 1970, p. 28)

The "lost humanity" of women has been variously captured in phrases such as "the second sex," "the other," "the invisible class," "the culture of silence." Feminism, women's struggle to become more fully human, is a struggle of emancipation, a struggle to transform reality. The intersubjective nature of reality is both the gravest obstacle to, and the most powerful tool for, women's transformation of the world.

Reality as we experience it, is a socially constructed, maintained, and changed phenomenon. The nature of commonsense reality, that self-evident taken for granted state of being, appears firmly sedimented subjectively and objectively in and around us. It is both created and sustained by our social interaction, our apprehension of others. Berger and Luckmann (1967) suggest that reality comprises an ongoing dialectic embodying the three moments of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. That is, social order is a continuing human production in which any individual member of society simultaneously externalizes her own subjective being, verifies this externalization as an objective reality which is experienced as existing "out there," and internalizes that external reality into her own subjective self.

However, while it is true that we simultaneously create and are created by society, this is not equally true for all members who share a common world. Some are more the creators; others are more the created. While it is legitimate to acknowledge the paradox that humankind is capable of producing a world that is then experienced as other than a human product, it is also true that those less involved in the creation are generally the more alienated from the product. In the ongoing evolution of a social order in which the power to create is monopolized by one class of society to the exclusion of another class, an oppressor / oppressed relationship is established. Any such relationship necessitates a dialectic in which the oppressed exist as the antithesis, the complement to the oppressor; without the oppressed and their submission, the oppressor could not exist. This does not mean, however, that the oppressed are to blame for their lot, but rather, that the oppressors have systematically created a dominant, carefully legitimated reality that will ensure the continuation of their power.

One of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed is prescription. Every prescription represents the imposition of

> one (person's) choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the (person) prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness. Thus, the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor. (Freire, 1970, p. 31)

It is typical of an oppressed class that they are positioned passively in the world. That is, the role of the oppressor becomes that of prescriber or domesticator as he carefully tailors the reality that will "enter into" the oppressed, who are deemed properly socialized when they fit the world the oppressors have created, when they adapt to the dialectic imposed, partake of the dominant world view. The oppressed is spectator, not creator; less a conscious being than a possessor of a consciousness. However, it is the very nature of consciousness, the fact that the intentionality of consciousness is rarely fully destroyed, and that integral connection between consciousness and language, that allows the possibility of ever adopting an alternate world view.

> One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. (Freire, 1970, p. 36)

It is undeniable that language determines the limits of our world, that we are never in a position to know a world outside of discourse. Language is reality--and consciousness--constituting. It is also our means of reflection about our reality. It is the metaphorical or polysemic aspect of language, that pregnant lack of correlation between reality and meaning and therefore, within shared meanings, that serves as our primary instrument for the discovery of "new" meaning, for the refocusing of experience and consciousness. Our use of metaphor and analogy are essential in our attempts to think the world. They enable us to see beyond our sedimented common world perspective to express a new viewpoint. As Freire suggests, the word is more than just the essence of dialogue. A word embodies both reflection and action, a praxis, the potential to transform the world. Thus, language is able to refer with new intention to a previously undisclosed aspect of experience such that it reveals a hitherto unnamed or indistinct perspective. As

Suzanne Langer (1976) puts it: "Most new discoveries are suddenly-seen things that were always there. . .a new idea is a light that illuminates presences which simply had no form for us before the light fell on them."

Reality is created and sustained primarily through talk (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Spender, 1980). Those who control the talk, shape and control the dominant reality. Recent research has left no doubt that it is men who control the talk of this world (e.g., Daly, 1973; 1978; Lakoff, 1975; Rich, 1979; Spender, 1980)[2] However, in the late 1960s and early 1970s women began to get together to talk. Coming together to dialogue in consciousness-raising groups, a radical refocussing of experience and consciousness occurred. Women's experience was now being illuminated by women themselves. Previously unseen phenomena came into view and a feminist way of seeing the world, a feminist construction of reality, emerged.

B. Feminists Construct Reality

Bardwick (1979) distinguishes between feminists in the following manner:

1. conservative feminists who are essentially content with the status quo but wish some change in their personal lives, such as the redistribution of housework or equal pay for equal work.
2. reformist feminists who wish to retain but modify the institutions of society (e.g., familial, legal, educational).
3. radical feminists who claim that society needs basic changes in its vital institutions.

Both reformist and radical feminists extend personal goals and solutions into the political

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[2]There are many excellent analyses of the sexism inherent in the English language. These references represent but a few of my favourites. I'll elaborate here, only briefly, with one common example. With the introduction of the generic he/man in the mid-sixteenth century the linguistic and, therefore, everyday dominance of man became a sedimented part of our common world view. Consequently, the semantic space reserved for women is negative in the sense that language sets up a "plus male/minus male" dichotomy. For women who do not wish to be compared to men, there is nowhere to go in the English language. In the language in which we are immersed, women are made invisible. "Since the female pronoun always designates females while the male pronoun designates all humans as well as males, patriarchal language, as manifested in the pronomial system of English, extended the scope of maleness to include humanity, while restricting femaleness to "the other," who is, by implication, nonhuman. Any speaker internalizing such a language unconsciously internalizes the values underlying such a system, thus perpetuating the cultural and social assumptions necessary to maintain the patriarchal power structure." (Stanley & Robbins, 1977).

arena. Radical feminists, however, view society as embodying a patriarchal order and see their task as changing that sedimented patriarchal structure.

Radical feminism was born out of women's talk. Although it embodies varied expression and thereby eludes definitive explication, the fundamentals of radical feminism are common across its numerous forms. When women got together to talk we began to see the collective nature of women's experience. Through a discussion of our common experiences we began to see and name the dominant ideology that holds women to be inferior. Feminism has its roots in women's attempts to evolve meanings that matched our experience. It grew out of the vision that women needed to reconceptualize the objects and events of the world, needed to reorganize the dominant ways of making sense of the world. Adrienne Rich (1979) succinctly captured feminists' emerging vision when she declared that the dominant world view or "objectivity" is nothing other than male "subjectivity." The patriarchal order is the product of male subjectivity but it has been legitimated and made "unquestionable" by conceptualizing it as "objectivity." She says:

> Feminism means finally that we renounce our obedience to our fathers and recognize that the world they have described is not the whole world. Masculine ideologies are the creation of masculine subjectivity: they are neither objective, nor value free, nor exclusively 'human.' Feminism implies that we recognize fully the inadequacy for us, the distortion, of male created ideologies, and that we proceed to think, and act, out of that recognition. (1979, p. 207)

As women talked and began to see the similarity of our experiences, we came to define ourselves as a distinct group, a class. One of the germinal insights of feminist thought was the discovery that "woman" is a social category, one that has been constructed historically and socially, one that has subordination at its core. With the illumination of women as a class, women began to look at social and political explanations of their situation, rather than resorting to personal and psychological notions of responsibility, that is, blaming ourselves. Thus, the sexual politics of radical feminism blossomed, representing a form of direct struggle against man's construction of "woman," and a penetrating analysis of the systemic, structural subordination of women, that is, patriarchy.

Patriarchy refers to "male subjectivity," the "prescriptions of the oppressor class." It is the dominant ideology that creates and maintains women as "other."[3] Patriarchy hovers on the crucial underlying rule that the world can be divided into plus male and minus male categories. It is a symbolic order into which we are born. As we become members of society and begin to enter the meanings which the symbols represent, we also begin to structure the world so that these symbols come to make sense: we enter into the meaning of the patriarchal order and we then help to give it substance, we help it to come true. Beechy (1979) defines patriarchy in this manner:

> The concept of patriarchy has been used within the women's movement to analyze the principles underlying women's oppression. . .it has been used. . .in the search for an explanation of feelings of oppression and subordination, and in the desire to transform feelings of rebellion into a political practice and theory. . . .Thus the theory of patriarchy attempts to penetrate beneath the particular experiences and manifestations of women's oppression and to formulate some coherent theory of the basis of subordination which underlies them. (p. 66)

It is the concept of patriarchy that coherently unifies radical feminists' analyses of subjects as diverse as language, pornography, motherhood, sexuality, economics, violence, housework, feminity, eating, or prostitution.

Because men have had a monopoly on the production of meaning, we exist within, what Mary Daly (1978) terms, monodimensional reality. With the enforced silence of women, any possible meaning alternatives have been pre-empted so that the male view of the world has been accepted by both sexes as the view of the world. Yet, I expect women have long known that the dominant reality is not the one and only reality. As the muted class, women inevitably see more. We are required to know and operate within man's definition of the world, and thereby come to appreciate the parameters of male reality. In this sense, marginality provides access to a broader range of meaning. Men, however, who have accepted the definitive nature of the dominant reality are unlikely to be familiar with any other focus. Whereas multidimensional reality may be a daily lived experience for

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[3] I agree with Mary Daly (1978) that 'patriarchy appears to be everywhere.' As a sex-class system and a symbolic system which supports male supremacist social arrangements, there is currently no aspect of our lives, that I know of, which is outside patriarchy.

many women, it may be nothing less than an absurd and abstract concept for many men. For them, the implications of the possibility of multiple reality can be extremely threatening, partly because it exposes the illusory nature of male supremacist reality. Roberts (1976) has said:

> Because of female exclusion from thought systems, the hardest thing for a man to know IS what a woman wants. But it is harder still for him to listen and to accept her thoughts because they are certain to shake the foundations of his beliefs. (p. 19)

The existence of feminist meanings undermines our immersion in monodimensional reality and challenges patriarchy at its core. For the dominant meanings of society even to be open to question represents a shift in power, because males find themselves in a position of having to react--defend their meanings as the incontestable reality or accept women-defined meanings and the possibility of multi-dimensional reality. In effect, for the dominant class, this can amount to the disintegration of their world. Thus, it is to be expected that many men will not want women to talk; nor will they want to hear what women have to say as we break our silence.

The revolutionary nature of woman-talk, of the early consciousness-raising groups can be seen within this context. Many women have commented on the conflict created by their attendance at these meetings. Men were feeling threatened and uneasy. Spender (1980) has documented what some women have had to say about their male partners' reactions to their developing alternate world view. For example:

> Every time I went to a CR group, there was a hassle. . .well, really, it was more than a hassle you know. I didn't understand at the time that he was really frightened. I used to just think he was being difficult. . . you know, just plain nasty, that he didn't want me to go out. . .but did we have some fights? He tried to make me promise that I would *never* talk about him. He would get so. . .so angry. He didn't want his private life "paraded in public" he said. And when I wouldn't promise, of course I *couldn't* promise not to talk about him, he was, well, uncontrollable. . .I didn't realize the significance of it all at the time, you know. If I did talk about him. . .warts and all, you know. . .how could he keep his image of superiority? He thought he was being exposed. . .that his

> superiority would be seen as a fraud. . .(laughter) And he was right, of course. That *was* what it was all about' (laughter). (Spender, 1980, p. 109)
>
> Just about every woman I know who lives with a male has problems. They want to know what you are doing, where you are going, what time you will be home, what you are going to talk about. . .you know, every little detail they can. As if knowing it all is somehow going to bring it all under their control. They feel pretty insecure at times. My guy thinks there is some sort of conspiracy going on and that he is going to lose. He is vague about it, but that's really what it is. I find I have to put a lot of energy into convincing him. That's why, I think that's why, women are finding it easier to form relationships with other women, because, well women aren't threatened in the same way by the independence of other women as men are. Most of the men I know want women to be accountable, otherwise they think they don't know. . .where they stand. They can't control things if they don't know that. (Spender, 1980, p. 110)

Men began to worry about what women were saying, what was moving from private into public discussion. They had a vague sense of the first crack in their image of dominance. Not used to being without control, they worried at their lack of control over what "their" women might say in the consciousness-raising groups. When directly confronted with women-centred meanings, many men showed considerable anxiety as they perceived that events were moving beyond their control; as some women gained confidence, understandabaly but not inevitably, some men became unsure.

> You might say that he wasn't at all subtle. I began to see that I had these choices, you see, that there were options open to me. I tried to talk about them, you know I really made an effort. I began to think it was all right for me to work, and not to be a housewife. . .I was excited, and I wanted to explain, and to communicate. But that wasn't any good and. . .he just got more and more confused, and. . .he just did. And he got upset. He said I wasn't sticking to the bargain. I mean I didn't know what bargain he was talking about and I said so. I said I didn't remember making any bargain. But that was when he said it went without saying that we had made a bargain, that everybody did, and he

thought I wanted to have children, and that, well, that I had misled him. I'd been sort of. . .deceitful.

It was very difficult. It all changed, our relationship did. The basis changed. He had always been the sort of initiator, in a way, and I had reacted. Now he didn't know what to do, then, not when I started saying what I wanted. Of course, you know, I tried to make it more equal, like equal decisions, but it didn't work. It was like he didn't know what to do if he wasn't the centre. He couldn't really deal with anything unless he was in the driving seat. Things were becoming more clear for me and more confused for him. We could both see that. . .But he believed it was my fault. That it would go away. . .you know, if I could just be the girl he married. (Spender, 1980, pp. 118-119)

Many men just could not accept, as their lived experience, a multidimensional reality. Many relationships were unable to adjust to the changes women were making, unable to incorporate women-centred meanings within their interactions. Some women chose to hold to their new definition of the world and leave their partnerships. Other women, however, did not have that choice.

I am dependent on him. It's as simple as that. He can call the tune. I have to think of the kids. . .if he says you don't go to those bitching sessions, I don't go. And he was right, it was causing us problems. I was, honestly, sometimes pretty discontented after them. I try to put it behind me now. I couldn't have kept going to the sessions, though, I couldn't go on with them and stay in the same relationship. He would have had to change, and he didn't want to. He didn't see why he should. I think I can see his point. He had planned his life and I was, well, just upsetting the plans. So, that was it. (Spender, 1980, p. 117)

For many of the women who participated in the early consciousness-raising groups, the coming together of a feminist definition of reality with attachment to a male partner, was indeed akin to mixing oil and water. As the dominant class men have, at their fingertips, a variety of arguments and sanctions designed to reimpose the monopoly of their construction of the world. Not least amongst these is the economic dependence of most women. Further strategies, such as sexual violence, have become publicly visible and acknowledged in recent years. Others, however, remain largely invisible except for

isolated feminist debate. Amongst these is the notion of the institution of compulsory heterosexuality, which Rich (1980) posits as one of the most successful strongholds of patriarchy.

C. Compulsory Heterosexuality

"Compulsory heterosexuality" was first named as one of the "crimes against women" by the Brussels Tribunal on crimes against women in 1976. In 1980 Adrienne Rich published a paper which has been of considerable influence in the radical feminist community, titled "Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence." In exploring the parameters of the institution of compulsory heterosexuality, she says

> The lie is many-layered. In Western tradition, one layer--the romantic--asserts that women are inevitably, even if rashly and tragically, drawn to men. . .in the tradition of the social sciences it asserts that primary love between the sexes is "normal," that women *need* men as social and economic protectors, for adult sexuality, and for psychological completion; that the heterosexually constituted family is the basic social unit; that women who do not attach their primary intensity to men must be, in functional terms, condemned to an even more devastating outsiderhood than their outsiderhood as women. (1980, p. 657)

Rich presents a powerful and convincing argument for viewing heterosexuality as a social institution key in perpetrating patriarchal order. She sees heterosexuality as enforced by diverse means--for example, by denying women our own sexuality, by means of clitoridectomy and infibulation, punishment for lesbian sexuality, strictures against masturbation; by forcing male sexuality by means of rape, wife beating, incest, the socialization of women to feel that male sexual "drive" amounts to a "right," arranged marriages and the idealization of heterosexual romance in art, literature, pop music, media, and advertising; by commanding women's labour and controlling their produce by means of the institutions of marriage and motherhood, as unpaid production, the horizontal segregation of women in paid employment, sexual harassment in the work place, male control of abortion, contraception, and childbirth--to briefly name but a few of her examples.

Patriarchy turns on the hub of heterosexuality. It is part of the dominant meaning fabric constructed by men and it emerges as the only practical means of survival for most women. Heterosexuality is less a "natural preference" for most women and more a systematically imposed and carefully managed state of being. This frequently leads to what Rich calls "the double life." "We may faithfully or ambivalently have obeyed the institution, but our feelings--and our sensuality--have not been tamed or contained within it." (p. 654) While women marry or ally with men for practical reasons, it is most often women who make life endurable for each other; who comfort and advise, confide, laugh and cry together, give physical affection without causing pain, stick by each other.

Rich hedges on the question of whether or not all heterosexual relations should be condemned but she does imply that all heterosexual relations are coercive or compulsory relations.

> Never is it asked whether, under conditions of male supremacy, the notion of consent has any meaning. . .sexual intercourse normally occurs between economic (as well as physical) unequals. . .the apparent legal requirements that violations of women's sexuality appear out of the ordinary before they will be punished helps prevent women from defining the ordinary conditions of their own consent. (MacKinnon, 1979, in Rich, 1980, pp. 642-643)

Accordingly, the degree to which a woman is sexually and emotionally independent of men, while bonding with women, measures her resistance to the patriarchy.

Rich touches an aspect of women's oppression that has created emotional and intellectual rifts amongst feminists. The first focus of feminist theory, in the late sixties and early seventies was a radical critique of the family, and the dissection of the structure and function of phallocentric sexuality. Radical feminists explored the price women pay for male love claiming that love can only exist between equals, not between oppressed and oppressor. Many concluded that within the current context of inequality, heterosexual love can only be destructive for women.

> Women must unite--we must learn to love ourselves and each other, we must grow strong and independent of men. . .the idea that women must teach men how to love, that we must not become manhaters is, at this point in history, like preaching Pacifism to the Viet Cong. (Shelley, 1970, p. 127)

This early dialogue was fierce and very painful. Many women opted for lesbianism, feeling that the price of maintaining sexual relations with a man in a sexist society was too high. For many who continued their heterosexuality, the pain and insights involved in this dialogue led them to withdraw from radical feminism. There was division between lesbian and heterosexual feminists and the politics of personal sexuality was more or less evaded for ten years.

There seem to have been two main reasons for heterosexual feminists' reticence in discussing and examining their sexual choice. Firstly, the politicization of intimate female-male relationships, represents the most explosive and threatening aspect of feminist sexual politics for many women.

> As heterosexual women, many of us feel we have a stake in backing away from an analysis that threatens to arrive at the conclusion that life-with-a-man, the central expectation of most of our childhood dreams of adult life, is not merely unprogressive, but unviable as well. Whether or not decent relationships with men are possible remains an open question. But the fear that men may look like a bad compromise for most women leads us to turn away from our experiences with men and from using our own life dilemmas as the basis of political theory and practice. (Harber, 1979, pp. 423-4)

An immersion in radical sexual politics can lead to an illumination of the "rather not seen." Continuing to see the previously unseen precipitates a quest for change and change is rarely painless. An exploration of heterosexuality can create considerable questioning for a feminist--Have I really chosen my heterosexuality? Have I just not emerged from my primary socialization?--guilt at perpetrating a patriarchal structure, conflict around desiring and enjoying shared sexuality with a man, shame at feeling somehow less of a feminist because of being attracted to men.

On the other hand, there is a whole area of women's experience of men which feminist theory and politics has not successfully addressed. The experience of feminist women who seek, enjoy and feel equal in heterosexual sex, who are attracted to, feel in love and claim fulfilling relationships with men, cannot always be reduced to "false consciousness." Heterosexual feminists have also been reticent about exploring their experiences with men, because there has been little forum within feminist sexual politics

to acknowledge the positive components of heterosexual love. The joyful experiences of these women are invisible within a radical feminist framework. They are often not heard because the ideology suggests they are unlikely. Thus, when radical feminists imply that all heterosexual relations are coercive or compulsory, they "deny the experience of feminist women who claim to maintain an equal relationship with men, women who deny that their involvements are coercive or even that they have to put second their own needs, their self respect, or their relationships with women." (Ferguson, Zita & Addelson, 1982, p. 159)

D. Heterosexuality and a Feminist Consciousness

> Deep down, heterosexuality is, for a feminist, the desire not to write off the male half of the species completely. Such an insight is (a) hypocritical, (b) visionary, (c) the ultimate liberalism, or (d) Famous Last Words. (Morgan, 1984, p. 165)

The last few years have seen a softening of some of the initial splits within the feminist movement. There has been some loosening of ideological parameters and a renewed attention to women's actual experience. The early eighties has seen a refocusing on accounts of personal sexuality and a fresh look at their political ramifications. A small number of these articles have touched upon some aspects of women's experiences of combining feminism and heterosexuality (e.g., Hamblin, 1983; Kates, 1982; Lazarre, 1980; Morgan, 1984). These nascent writings suggest a number of images.

The first image is these women's perceptions of participating within their relationships as an equal. They write of the freedom and expansiveness inherent in their daily being together with their male partners, the satisfaction of being able to feel and express their strength, the richness that comes from being able to be expressively oneself in all shades of mood, the experience of feeling equally powerful.

> I live with a man and I love him dearly. . .I do not live with this man because I need his money or because I will be damned as an old maid otherwise. I do not fear he will leave me if he finds out how strong I really am, because I didn't make myself weaker in order to attract him. . .this relationship is built as much on my power as it is on his. (Kates, 1982, p. 78)

Secondly, an image of intensity, of aliveness, and a sense of common movement emerges. Perhaps that is inevitable within an "examined marriage," to use Robin Morgan's (1984) expression;[4] living with awareness embodies the possibility of constant reflection and action, constant change. Perhaps it has to do with that fluid balance between the need for intimacy and the struggle for autonomy, the pivot upon which Lazarre (1980) suggests feminist heterosexual relationships turn. However, what is apparent is a rich and dynamic interaction, the freedom to express oneself, to give rein to diverse emotions, whether they be joy, fury, lust, or fear.

> A committed relationship that is as vivid as it is dimensional is not impossible, as we've always suspected. . . .The time comes when a sag does occur in the middle of a marriage, where the novelty has gone and yet some bold new shamelessness is yet to emerge; this can either end the relationship or else implode it into an intensity that is not muted or dull, that doesn't settle for anything--that is, experimental, sexually passionate and totally unpredictable. It's hard work. It's perilous. It's exhilarating. That, dear reader, is why I've stayed married. (Morgan, 1984, p. 183)

For many women, being a feminist and loving a man brings the conflict inherent in juxtaposing two perspectives,--the one, of man as individual lover and friend and the other of Man, member of the privileged, oppressing class. This elicits the unpredictable experience of having a beloved turn into an enemy; the ambivalence of living at one and the same time, two apparently contradictory truths.

> I frequently feel contradictions, because I hate all men. I hate the way they oppress and sexually abuse us, and when I am deeply in touch with this part of myself I feel distant and alienated from all men, including my lover and my son. This can be very difficult for me (as well as for them) because, at the same time, I also love them.
>
> It sometimes feels to me that this part of me that loves them is the problem--if I could get rid of that and simply cut them out of my life and my heart, my life would be much simpler and less filled with contradiction. Yet, at

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[4]Robin Morgan says "I would say that ours is an "examined marriage," since I agree with Carolyn Heilbrun that, "an unexamined marriage is only slightly better than an unexamined life. Both are like Dante's hell: one goes on doing what one is doing." (1984, p. 153)

> the same time the part of me that loves them is a very important part of me, which I don't want to get rid of. (Hamblin, 1983, p. 120)

The combination of feminism and heterosexuality also brings with it what Kates (1982) calls "feminist shame." There is an awareness amongst these women that living with a man is seen by many feminists as "politically incorrect," as bringing to question one's true commitment to women. Those women who have chosen to maintain their relationships with men and struggle to transform them are often seen as taking the easy way out, selling out on feminism or even as "collaborators with the enemy." This has led to heterosexual feminists being apologetic or defensive about their choices. In its extreme form it has created, within the women's movement, the "closet heterosexual."

> Why is it then that I am ashamed of him? Why is my voice so defensive when I write and speak about my life companion? When there's a woman's concert or a feminist band is playing for a dance, I don't want him to come, even though I hate to reject him. When I go to a women's meeting or a women's dinner party, I always stay late, as if to pretend to myself and the other women there that I'm not going home to a man. I call this 'feminist shame' and I'm not the only heterosexual in the women's movement who suffers from it. (Kates, 1982, p. 78)

Another image to emerge from these writings is that of the attraction to men as other; curiosity and desire for the unknown, fascination with a different way of being in the world. Men as other invite challenge and the opportunity to learn, whether that be how to fix a car or chop wood, construct an argument or yell when angry, walk with more confidence or live with less fear. Men as other also arouse desire sexually. These women enjoy male bodies, the way they look, feel, smell.

Much of the writing on feminism and heterosexuality has had to do with sexuality. Sexuality, of course, is the arena within which the two commitments most clearly converge. Expression of feminist heterosexual passion is frequently described as having to do with the balance between vulnerability and autonomy, an openness that holds possibilities for both connection with and transcendence of self on the one hand, and loss of self on the other hand. Honest sexual passion always involves a profound and vulnerable knowing and being known. It is not easy to be a feminist and to be sexual in this

culture. To be a feminist and heterosexual means risking wanting and being vulnerable with a beloved who may turn into Man, risking loss of autonomy in the search for connection and self.

> . . .desperately trying to find the relationship between the need for intimacy and the struggle for autonomy, between the body--wide yearning for fusion with a man--the exhilarating transcendence of self that can, for me, accompany sexual union--and the more destructive loss of self that passion can bring in its often overpowering wake. (Lazarre, 1980, p. 213)

Passionate sexual desire always hovers as a threat to autonomy. For the feminist who wants a man, this interaction is played out within a host of social and political pictures.

> Do you know how much you can hate someone you love. . .we start to make love and he does some small thing that seems innocuous: he touches my breast. I freeze. The image that flashes on my mental screen is like a hall of mirrors, multiplying thousandfold the sight of men grabbing women's breasts. I want to forget it all when he touches me, but I've seen those mirror images too many times. . . (Kates, 1982, p. 77)

The final image to emerge, for me, from a reading of these articles, is that of the possibility of change, experienced by these women as occurring in themselves, in their partners, and in their relationships, across lines as diverse as sharing domestic chores to expressing sexuality. Of course these women are speaking of relationships that have survived the course of time, such that adaptability and transition seem crucial components of an ongoing feminist and heterosexual union. Also, these women are all economically independent of their partners. Their experience does, however, suggest that in some instances, under some conditions, two very different ways of being in the world can come together and create a realm of shared reality consistent with the personal meaning and creative expression of both partners.

> Inequality can be changed but only if both people are willing to discuss it again and again; only if they are willing to re-evaluate their own ideas and challenge themselves, only if they are honest with themselves and with each other. It sounds pretty daunting, but I don't think its in any way impossible, though it may cause a fair bit of pain getting there. (Hamblin, 1983, p. 122)

Within the context of man's construction of our dominant reality, radical feminism's articulation of women-centred meaning, and a nascent literature on feminists' relationships with men, this study seeks to unfold, in some of its richness, a portrait of being feminist and living with a man. Because the dimensions of this experience are largely invisible--with the exception of isolated aspects that have been suggested by the sporadic documentation of women's experiences of consciousness-raising groups within the context of their heterosexual partnerships and the more recent personal accounts of feminist heterosexuality--an exploratory approach was engaged.

III. THE HERMENEUTICAL ENCOUNTER

A. Dialectical Hermeneutics

This dissertation came into being because of a question. Its being arose out of the knowledge of not knowing on the part of the writer. Its existence emerged in response to the query, "What is is like to be a feminist and to be living with a man?" Accordingly, this dissertation and the process of its coming to be, is hermeneutical.

The roots for the word "hermeneutics" lie in the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, which is generally translated as "to interpret." *Hermeneuein* recalls the wing-footed messenger-god Hermes, whose task it was to bring to human understanding that which was beyond the grasp of human intelligence. Modern use of the term "hermeneutics" dates only from the seventeenth century, when it came to refer to principles of biblical interpretation. This is probably still the most widespread understanding of the term today. However, the field of hermeneutics has evolved radically since its seventeenth century origins. Palmer (1969) suggests that contemporary hermeneutical thinking is polarized between those who would restrict the field to the generation of methodological principles underlying interpretation, thereby assuming the possibility of objectively valid knowledge, in the tradition of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, and those who see hermeneutics as a philosophical exploration of the nature of understanding, thereby calling into question the possibility of objective historical knowledge, along the lines of Heidegger and Gadamer. The context for this thesis is found within the latter characterization of hermeneutics, and builds primarily upon the work of Gadamer (1976), who conceives of hermeneutics as the ontology and phenomenology of understanding.

> (One) is not so much a knower as an experiencer; the encounter is not a conceptual grasping of something but an event in which a world opens itself up to (one). Insofar as each interpreter stands in a new horizon, the event that comes to language in the hermeneutical experience is something new that emerges, something that did not exist before. In this event, grounded in linguisticality and made possible by the dialectical encounter with the meaning of the transmitted text, the hermeneutical experience finds its fulfillment. (Palmer, 1969, p. 209)

In these few words, Palmer (1969) captures the essence of the hermeneutical encounter. In the following pages his words are discussed in more detail.

Hermeneutics, as elaborated by Gadamer (1976) stands in opposition on key issues to a positivist-based, empirical science approach to knowledge. It assumes the interface between the event of one's research, one's questioning and the world in which one lives as researcher, as questioner. Correspondingly, it disallows the separateness of the questioner and, therefore, the claim to a universally valid truth. Its purpose, in understanding, is participation and openness as opposed to prediction and control. Similarly, understanding is conceived of having to do with experience rather than knowledge, dialectics rather than methodology. It invites the transformation of one's horizons, the risking of one's assumptions in contrast to the validation of one's firmly held hypotheses. Hermeneutics assumes the surrender to, rather than the manipulation of an event.

Gadamer proposes the concept of a game as the model which best reveals his dialectical hermeneutics. The notion of the game provides a model of a structure which has its own autonomy and yet is open to the viewer. Our participation in the game brings it into being and yet the game has its own movement independent of its players. It comes into being through dialectical interaction, through common immersion in a world, the creation of which extends beyond the horizons of its individual participants.

> The game has its own special spirit. The player chooses which game he will give himself to, but once he chooses he enters a closed world in which the game comes to take place in and through the players. In a sense the game has its own momentum and pushes itself forward; it wills to be played out. (Palmer, 1969, p. 172)

A game is experienced or understood differently depending upon one's standpoint in time and space. Gadamer stresses the historicality of understanding. That is, he argues that understanding is intrinsically temporal, it is always a seeing of the world from our particular immersion in tradition, from our situatedness in our past, our present, and our future. Because we bring our individual history to the process of understanding, understanding is always "in terms of," "in relation to," and "within the context of." Thus, there is a recognition that meaning is not a changeless property of an event, but is always

"for us"--meaning for someone in a particular time and place.

Because we are immersed in tradition, because we cannot stand outside the relativity of history, there is no possibility for "objectively valid knowledge." There is no possibility for "presuppositionless interpretation." In fact, because tradition is the very fabric of our relations, the horizon within which we do our thinking, it is neither possible nor desirable to suspend it, to stand outside prejudgements, the preunderstandings which are part of it. It is, in fact, our historicality, our prejudgements that allow us the possibility of understanding.

Here we see some of the dialectical nature of understanding, that process of interaction between the self-understanding of the questioner and her horizion with what is encountered. This process is known as the "hermeneutical circle." One must have an assumed understanding, a preunderstanding in order to have the knowledge of not knowing, in order to form a question. Similarly, one must preunderstand a subject or situation in order to enter the horizon of its meaning. Yet when one takes an attitude of not knowing all into an encounter with another horizon, this invites an alteration in the original understanding. A transformation in the preunderstanding, a change in the questioner's horizons completes the hermeneuetical circle and touches the very kernel of hermeneutical experience.

Coming to an understanding is not a matter of reconstructing the world of the other. Nor is it a matter of abandoning one's own world. Rather, it is a process of allowing a text, an individual history, a tradition to address one in one's present world. "Understanding is a participation in a stream of tradition, in a moment which mixes past and present" (Palmer, 1969, p. 185). The questioner's participation is characterized by an authentic openness to the "thou." Her attitude is one of expectancy, one of not knowing all, one of allowing something to be said to her. It is the kind of openness that wills to hear rather than to master. Accordingly, it invites the possibility of personal change through its encounter with the other.

Palmer (1969, p. 191) speaks of the hermeneutical encounter as "bringing what is essential in the past into our personal present, our self understanding, or more accurately our experience of being." The interpreter risks her own position through the fusion of horizons that characterizes the hermeneutical experience. In authentic understanding the

interpreter allows herself to be questioned by her interaction with the other, such that the horizons of her own world, her self understandings are broadened; she sees in a different way, adopts a fresh view of life, in such a way as to become more fully present to herself. Thus, while a question is addressed to a text, an event, a "thou," in a deeper sense the "thou" in turn questions her interpreter. Accordingly, Gadamer claims that the dialectical structure of experience generally, and of hermeneutical experience in particular, reflects itself in the question-answer structure of all true dialogue.

Underlying the hermeneutical encounter is the experience of negativity, the experience of knowing that one does not know, of sensing that something is other than we had once assumed. Thus, the significance of the question. To question genuinely, says Gadamer, is to "place in the open" because the answer is as yet undetermined. A question, however, is never truly open but always contains some direction such that the answer has meaning only in terms of the question. This raises the problem of knowing what constitutes the right question. Gadamer suggests that it is not so much a question of right or wrong, but rather relevant or irrelevant. An irrelevant question is one for which there is no answer; it yields no true knowledge; it does not address the participant's experience. According to Gadamer, the appropriate way to generate relevant questions is through immersion in the subject at hand. A common immersion in the matter under discussion moves the inter-viewing encounter in unforeseen directions.

Ultimately it is because of our immersion in language that the hermeneutical experience becomes at all possible. Just as we belong to a certain group or a certain country, so too do we belong to language and history. We participate in them. Language is the medium in which tradition and experience both conceal and reveal themselves. It provides the common ground through which two individual horizons can meet, transcend their individuality and create a shared world. It is because we exist in language that language has the power to disclose and reveal. Such is the power of language that it can lay open a world different from our own and yet allow us an understanding of that world.

It is the nature of language also, that yields yet another aspect of hermeneutical understanding. A bringing to linguistic expression provides a unity of the said and the unsaid. Behind all that is said, hangs a backdrop of the unsaid. "Everything that is said is really ordered by a larger direction of meaning in the ungraspable" (Palmer, 1969, p. 210).

Thus, Gadamer argues, interpretation is necessarily speculative. It means hearing not just what is said, but also listening to the unsaid as it speaks from its silence. In fact, what is said can only be understood in relation to what is not said, what, perhaps, could not be said. Thus, the interpreter moves into a horizon within which other answers are possible.

Hermeneutics is typically applied to the interpretation of texts that date in origin years or centuries ago, whether they be Milton's Paradise Lost, Plato's dialogues, or the Pauline letters, for example. In psychology, however, the hermeneutical encounter brings the interpreter together not with an historical text, but with another person, a "thou," with her own individual history and horizons. The coming together of two human horizons without the element of temporal distance offers both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, the other horizon is more immediately available; it speaks to us with the richness of the living word, and the question that sparked the encounter addresses the participants in its immediacy, catching them up in the momentum of its world. However, while temporal distance does allow certain prejudgements peculiar to the nature of the subject to vanish, it also enables those more essential to a true understanding to emerge. Gadamer asserts that it is only with the passage of time that historical significance clearly comes into being.

This thesis cannot begin to address the historical significance of these hermeneutical conversations. It can, however, bring to expression the being of a particular situation, being feminist and living with a man, in the way in which it discloses itself to me, the interpreter, in terms of my being-in-the-world at this time and in this place.

B. The Conversationalists

Advertisements placed within feminist newsletters and organizations and word of mouth information about the study generated the participating conversationalists. From twenty-three volunteers, seven women were chosen with a view to including as much biographical variability as possible within the study's parameters of "being feminist." Of the seven participants, two came to the experience through their friendship with the writer, three came via word of mouth information, and two responded to written advertisements.

For the purposes of this encounter, "being feminist" embodied three major components. Firstly, each participant identified herself and spoke of herself as a feminist.

Being a feminist was an important--actually, in five cases, *the* important--aspect of self definition. Three of the women saw themselves as "radical feminists," the "radical" having to do with the nature and the extent of the changes they wished for the world. Four of the women did not define themselves as "radical feminists," because for them "radical" meant to be lesbian, or to be separatist, to wear certain clothes or to look and act in a certain way that was very different from their personal style. However, each of the women participating in this study would be classified as a radical feminist according to Bardwick's (1979) definition of radical feminists as those who wish to change the basic structure and institutions of society. Thus, an understanding of patriarchy and a shared language, a similarity in articulation, was apparent across these seven conversations. The third aspect of "being feminist" relative to this study was the fact that all women were currently involved with feminist organizations and actions. Amongst these seven participants, a wide variety of feminist contexts were touched--a women's employment centre, a battered women's shelter, an action against a sexual harassment group, a sexual assault centre, a pornography action group, a women against violence group. The other commonality amongst participants was that each of them was currently living within a heterosexual relationship, sharing a house with their male partner, cohabiting within a domestic space.

The conversationalists ranged in age from 26 to 59 years with a mean age of 39.5 years. The length of time women had been living with their partners ranged from 10 months to 30 years, the mean length of time being 13.5 years. Four of the women were married at the time of the conversation, two for the second time. One woman was divorced and cohabiting and two were single and cohabiting. In terms of ethnicity, six of the participants were Caucasian and one was Metis. Two of the conversationalists were Canadian born, one was American born, three came from other Commonwealth countries (Britain and South Africa), and one was European born (W. Germany). Three of the women had a Grade 12 education, two, a Bachelor of Arts, one, a College Diploma and one, a Masters in Social Work. All women were employed and had some measure of financial independence. Four had children, and one woman, a grandchild.

The precise number of participants was not determined prior to embarking upon these conversations. One participant yields a case study. Two participants yield the possibility of dichotomy, of picturing the resulting information in polar, either / or terms.

Three conversationalists are the minimum number of participants required to yield the possibility of a continuum, of integrating information along connecting themes. Thus, at the outset of this experience there was an expectation of at least three conversationalists.

There comes a sense of when to stop the dialogues, that is difficult to articulate. It is preceded by the feeling of personal transformation, by the knowledge that the conversations have altered the way one sees things. It embodies the sense of having already heard the essence of what is being said, although the individual details may differ radically. It was accompanied, for me, by a feeling of being filled to overflowing, of knowing that it was enough, of longing to just be with the conversations, wade through them and wait for that feeling of beginning to see, to emerge from the sensory to the linguistic, so that I could begin to speak it. For me, this occurred around the completion of the fifth conversation. With five participants, my interpretation of the experience of being feminist and living with a man would not have differed significantly from that which is presented with seven participants. However, my individual history, part of what I brought to this experience, is a tendency to err on the side of too much rather than too little. Thus, there are seven conversationalists. After seven I truly knew it was enough.

C. The Conversations

The question of what it means to be a feminist and affectionally and sexually linked with a man was explored by means of the hermeneutic dialogue. Conversations were conducted in participants' homes, except on a couple of occasions when they took place in the writer's office. The context was that of a relaxed and uninterrupted shared time, during which partners and children were not present.

The prelude to each conversation varied in pace with individual participants, but typically involved a cup of tea or coffee and informal dialogue. This was time during which a comfortable connection and consensus around the context of this connection was established. In all cases this happened quickly and easily. Prior to the formal beginning of the conversation, the question with which I entered the encounter was simply stated for each participant. I further explained that my interest in the experience of being feminist and with a man arose from my own being-in-the-world and from a sense of not knowing how the experience was for other women. Confidentiality was stressed and participants

were assured that they were free to answer or not answer questions as they wished. A "Consent to Participate" form was also completed at this time (see Appendix A).

Participants knew that I shared with them the experience of living with a man, and the experience of being feminist, which implies amongst other things, a common language. Sharing a common language, a common being-in-the-world can create tremendous trust, and did so, without exception, through the course of these dialogues. It can also, however, seduce the listener into assuming an understanding, into bringing what is revealed under the umbrella of her own horizons rather than truly opening her individual meanings to meet those expressed. Thus, the participants in this study were informed that the writer would frequently take a position of non-understanding in the face of an articulation whose meaning seemed obvious; that the listener would again and again ask for specific examples, for clarification in order that the participants' world would be more truly revealed. This anticipated the possibility of irritation and diminishing trust on the part of the speaker. It contextualized the possibility of her feeling non-understood, while allowing a true hermeneutic understanding to emerge for both participants.

This essential precaution was one of a number of clarifications to emerge from an earlier "pilot" conversation. This preliminary dialogue was important in providing insight as to the nature and quantity of data that might be expected in relation to length of time spent in dialogue. It allowed me to bring my preunderstandings, my assumptions about the nature of this experience, into contact with the living articulations of another woman as she spoke of her immersion in the world of being feminist and with a man. That is, it gave me a sense of whether or not my questions were relevant. The preliminary conversation also allowed me an awareness and greater refinement of the hermeneutic encounter. It brought to awareness for me some of the differences between effort and flow, between trying or directing the conversation and allowing it its own momentum; it highlighted that fine line between being too close to see and too far to feel. The hermeneutic encounter requires that one hover around that line, move back and forth between living the experience and reflecting upon it. It underlined how important it is for the questioner to use the language of the participant and thereby not introduce a different conceptualization of the participant's experience. It clarified the importance of consistently asking for examples, of moving from the general to the specific, so as to avoid the experience of thinking one

has understood, only to realize later that one has not truly opened to the other's experience, but rather, understood only in terms of one's own horizons. Inevitably, of course, this did happen at times. Thus, with a few participants there was some follow-up contact in order to clarify material.

Each conversation formally opened with the question, "Can you tell me what it's like for you to be in this relationship?" and then proceeded to unfold in its own unique way through a discussion of the following issues:

* the meaning of being feminist
* valued/enjoyed aspects of the relationship
* disliked/resented aspects of the relationship
* household task division
* workforce participation
* sexuality
* resolution of conflict
* relationships with other women
* relationships with other men
* being feminist and heterosexual

These issues represent the interpreter's pre-understandings of significance in being feminist and living with a man. They form the specific questions about the experience that hang as the backdrop in the hermeneutical encounter.

Conversations abounded with abstractions, generalizations, and feminist ideology. The questioner's task was primarily that of opening a conversational direction, of eliciting clarification and expansion, of moving the dialogue towards specific experiential examples and thereby away from theoretical generalizations. The questioner leads in terms of her decisions about significance, that is, in choosing certain areas of expression to pursue, while ignoring others. She does not, however, direct the specific content. Individual meanings, experiences, and connections are provided by the women themselves.

The conversations were tape recorded and later transcribed. The quotations embodied in the following chapter will attest to the harmony, the openness of these conversations. All participants risked revealing their worlds as they experienced them. The feeling of a shared rhythm, of a consensual flow dominated each conversation and any

moments of initial awkwardness and self consciousness soon disappeared. The conversations were enjoyable. There was laughter, a sense of two people liking each other and enjoying their shared dialogue. As the participants became immersed in the expression of their world, they typically forgot the tape recorder and certainly held little feeling that this was "research." In an attempt to capture the atmosphere of the hermeneutic encounter within the written word, I include some of the women's comments on the process.

> You were easy to talk to--I had the feeling you were listening from both genuine and academic interest. Your questions were well timed and often helped me clarify or express an idea that was previously confusing and difficult to talk about. I also appreciated your sense of humour and the relaxed pace of the interview. This added to the overall sense of fun and mutual exploration.
>
> I enjoyed myself immensely. It felt as though we were having an intimate conversation instead of my being interviewed. I felt at ease, natural and as though I was being "heard"; that all I had to say was important, valid, and interesting. I found I became aware, articulate, and creative in my manner of expression.
>
> Initially I was nervous, a bit guarded, and perhaps feared that I'd learn, from speaking about my life, things about myself / ourselves that I wasn't prepared to acknowledge. . .speaking about disagreements and heated arguments was difficult, it seemed to bring the very issues talked about into the foreground again. By the time we began the second interview I was at ease. . . .Did I think I would discover some dark truth?. . . .It was good to speak about the frustrations in my relationship--as well as the joy.
>
> Throughout the conversations I felt that I was involved in a co-operative project. I did not feel like an object being poked and prodded. It is so easy for interviewers (whether researchers or journalists) to start regarding their subjects as objects--as mines / minds to be mined, as fields to be harvested. In comparison you were respectful and supportive.

In all but one case, two conversations were completed with each participant. With the two conversations combined, the length of dialogue with participants varied from two to six hours. The second conversation afforded the time to go over the first and pursue that which was inadequately explored on the previous occasion. It also built upon the comfort of the first conversation and often allowed for an even greater openness. More private issues, such as sexuality, tended to be discussed during the second conversation. At the completion of the first meeting, participants frequently directed questions to the writer regarding her experiences. Bringing expression to some of her being-in-the-world appeared to facilitate the openness of the second conversation. At the completion of the conversations, demographic forms were filled out and participants chose the names they and their partners are called by in this study (See Appendix B). Some time afterwards, a Conversational Questionnaire was administered in order that participants might comment upon the process (See Appendix C).

In the hermeneutic encounter, where language is at the heart of expression, there is a coming to know through the process of speaking. Being in language is a coming to know one's experience. It is in language, that two distinct horizons meet and mutually transform. Thus, the conversations themselves contain many examples of a bringing to consciousness through the expression of one's being-in-the-world, a movement from unawareness to awareness. That this process can begin even before entering the formal conversation is illustrated in this quotation from Helen. She says:

> "After your phone call I told him about your opening words, and I said, you know, I've never really declared myself as a feminist. I sit on the fringes. But I have been aware probably for the last four or five years that I am a feminist. Aware, but somehow I hadn't really stood up and said, yes, I'm a feminist, hadn't really identified myself. Until four or five years ago I just thought I was different from other women. And he said, well, you are different from other women. You are different from most of the women I've known. And I said, well, what did you like when we decided to get married. And we had talked about it then, but when you're 63 you view things a little differently. And he said, the one thing I knew about you is that you were independent and I liked that. . .

Even in a brief, initial contact with a participant, the process of reflection and coming to know is already stimulated. In this instance, Helen comes to know and identify herself as a feminist in a new way; there is a seeing differently as an indistinct image becomes illuminated. Subsequently, throughout the conversations, Helen clearly refers to herself as a feminist. Furthermore, the phone call precipitated a conversation with her husband and a new understanding of his initial appreciation of her.

Throughout the conversations many instances of coming to know through language are apparent. Two examples are cited here to briefly illustrate this phenomenon. In the first example, Toni is speaking of a recurrent pattern of interactions between her and her partner, Sam. She says:

> It's really a funny thing. When I feel I haven't done something O.K. and I say to him, oh gosh, I didn't handle this properly, then he's right into, don't be so hard on yourself, what else could you have done, you're doing an excellent job. But if I say to him, oh, I did a speech that was so good, I said this and that, then he seems to want to bring me down, you know, were you prepared, what was the audience like, why did you say that that way. . .you know, that's funny. I've sort of known that, but I've not really seen it so clearly before. But, yea, when I'm insecure he's very supportive, but if I'm very confident then he comes with all his questions and ideas. . .

Through the expression of this experience Toni comes to newly recognize a pattern within her recurrent interactions with Sam. A previously half articulated sense comes clearly and fully to consciousness. In the second example, Manon has been speaking about her repeated attempts to resolve a long standing argument with her partner, Alain, an argument which, at the time of conversation had been resolved. In her speaking she comes to an awareness of the ineffectiveness of her repeated strategy for solution. She says:

> You know, I've never realized that before, but it's true, no matter how many different arguments, suggestions, reasons I presented him with, it didn't make any difference. I kept thinking I hadn't found the right argument yet, so I'd always bring it up again and try a different tack. . .hmmm. . .but now I think about it, it certainly didn't seem to work. I mean it had no impact on our finally coming to an agreement and that is why I'm not sure what happened to change

it and so I sometimes wonder how permanent the change is.

While it is common, within the hermeneutic process, for the speaker to come to insight through the immediate expression of her experience, it is also common for reflection and transformation to occur after the conversations. Administration of the Conversational Questionnaire some time after the completion of the conversations gave participants a chance to comment upon this process. This is what some of the women had to say:

> The conversations were a very positive experience for me. They prompted a deeper reflection on issues and choices. I thought about aspects of what we had talked about for some time afterwards. In some areas I had been challenged and I did some further reflecting. I remember thinking especially about the nature of friendships in general--about what makes for a committed, caring friendship.
>
> I finished with a very good feeling. It was a nice experience to reflect on the relationship and see it in its entirety by being interviewed. It gave me a deeper appreciation for what we have and our future goals. It pointed out again that we are truly equal and committed.
>
> I got a sense of perspective on my relationship--this being the first opportunity I'd had to talk extensively and in depth to someone there "just for me." As I verbalized, I had many "AHA" experiences. The picture that emerged was both familiar and surprising--I became aware of patterns and power dynamics I'd previously suspected but not taken the time to look at. . . .In retrospect I see the interview as one of a series of events in my life that illustrated for me where my relationship was at and how unbalanced it was. Somehow, stating my conflicts and the defenses I've built to mask them was a step towards facing and transforming them.

In the hermeneutic encounter one comes to the other in respect and openness. Therefore, what one does with the process and with the content of the dialogue is important. The conversational questionnaires provided feedback concerning participants' experience of the process. Feedback concerning content, how the conversational material was used and interpreted, was elicited by having women read an initial draft of this

discourse. I learned a lot by way of this interaction. With the exception of one woman, participants enjoyed the dissertation and endorsed my interpretation of their being-in-the-world. I knew I had truly spoken to their lives when I was met with comments like, "You mean, you can really say these things at University," or "I was surprised, it was great to read and I couldn't put it down."

However, the different reactions from Helen deserve comment because I believe they illustrate some crucial considerations. At the time of the interview, Helen, like the other participants, became immersed in the conversation and quite forgot the research purpose of the engagement. As we ended the conversation she emerged looking somewhat surprised and vulnerable. As a woman who is not often very open about her life, she was, in stepping out of the conversations, a little shocked at the ease with and extent to which she had revealed her being-in-the-world. This, of course, precipitated concerns regarding confidentiality which were discussed at that time. Reading the dissertation later was a distressing involvement for her. Seeing aspects of one's life in print is more stark and more permanent than the fleeting revelation of the living word. Helen did not feel that her confidentiality was ensured. She felt that her family and her friends would recognize her. Because we live in betweeness Helen had inevitably touched upon some private aspects of her husband's and children's lives and it was the inclusion of some of this material in the text that caused her primary concern. She speaks of her experience in this way:

> The conversations were relaxed and easy--almost too much so. The implications of my openness did not hit me until after the discussions. I was surprised at my own lack of caution in revealing information about myself, particularly in relation to my husband and children--a naivete about how the information might be used and might cause distress for them. My lack of sensitivity toward their need for confidentiality still amazes me. . .for me, the conversation was like a catharsis. I seldom talk about myself at any great length with anyone. However, I would not again reveal information of a confidential nature regarding family without obtaining consent first. The anxiety about upset to family is not worth the catharsis.

It seems to me that Helen's comments touch the very kernel of the hermeneutic process in a number of ways. The hermeneutic engagement invites a coming to see through speaking such that one might articulate an insight for the first time. In Helen's case this happened on a number of occasions. This inevitably entails some risk. Her words are a poignant and beautiful reminder that the hermeneutic encounter has to do with people and not unalive objects. Accordingly, her concerns were taken seriously and the text has been changed. In an exploration of this nature, the research can only be second to an authentic respect for participants' humaness.

The dialectic nature of the hermeneutic encounter invites transformation not only in the speaker, but also in the questioner. The impact of these conversations for the interpreter is discussed not in this chapter, but in chapter VI, the Epilogue. The dialectic nature of the hermeneutic encounter also means that the process of creating meaning brings the world of the interpreter into contact with the world of the conversationalists, such that an understanding of a question emerges from the coming together, the blending of individual horizons. Understanding is always in relation to. The meaning of being feminist and heterosexual portrayed in this dissertation, is meaning as it emerged for me, in relation to my lived experience in this particular time and place[5]. This necessitates some description of the interpreter's being-in-the-world.

D. An Autobiographical Reflection

Eight years ago, at the age of twenty-two, I came to Canada from New Zealand in order to attend graduate school. At that time I was probably what Bardwick (1979) calls a reformist feminist. Soon after arriving in Canada I began to volunteer with the local Rape Crisis Centre, answering crisis calls, counselling, and giving public speaks. Being at the

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[5]Giorgi (1975), in speaking generally of a qualitative approach to research, comments that the process of creating meaning and the non-universality of the resulting meaning, is often considered problematic because it is highly dependent upon the researcher's perspective. However, this is, in fact, a false difficulty, created by judging one approach from the assumptions inherent in another (the empirical) approach. Giorgi says, "The control of the data comes from the researcher's context or perspective of the data. Once the context and intention becomes known, the divergence is usually intelligible to all even if not universally agreeable. Thus, the chief point to be remembered with this type of research is not so much whether another position with respect to the data could be adopted (this point is granted beforehand), but whether a reader, adopting the same viewpoint as articulated by the researcher, can also see what the researcher saw, whether or not he agrees with it. That is the key criterion for qualitative research."

Centre, I came to be involved with the currently non-existent Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (C.A.S.A.C), which was dominated by a radical group of B.C. feminists. Very quickly my position and that of several other women at the Centre became radicalized in both analysis and action, and a group of us split from the Centre to form Women Against Violence Against Women (W.A.W.A.W.). WAWAW embraced the tenets of "radical therapy." We immersed ourselves in action, frequently co-operating with a number of other radical organizations that existed in the city at that time--organizing marches, feminist conferences, leafleting at sexist movies, spray-painting, stickering pornography, and the like. The demise of the group left me with many questions concerning effective strategies to work for change. My focus then moved more into feminist therapy where a considerable portion of my work was with incest and other sexual assault victim/survivors.

I met my husband, Paul, not long after arriving in Canada. We were married four and a half years ago. He has been with me for eight years, enjoying and suffering my feminism. When I reflect upon our relationship within the context of feminism, a number of distinct periods seem apparent. I see a brief summary of these different stages as the best way to portray the recent history of my being-in-the-world at the confluence of feminism and heterosexuality. Such is the horizon I bring to the process of creating meaning from these conversations.[6]

Setting out: She tells him she is a feminist. He acknowledges his support of feminism. They're both excited and optimistic about the new relationship. They'll try new things, create a model relationship, the relationship of the future.

The First Landslide: He is shocked to discover that this new consciousness really does pertain to housework. She is shocked to discover that he has just discovered this.

The "I'm Keen" Surge Ahead: He pitches in and Tries Hard. He reinvents new ways of doing everything so as (1) to escape the humiliation of taking instruction from her, (2) to give the job a jolt of creativity, and (3) to escape the mere doing of it. She acts (and sort of feels) grateful, and has spasms of guilt that he is doing even the little he is doing.

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[6]I borrow form Robin Morgan (1984) throughout this description. In charting the course of her relationship, her experience is, at times, so identical to mine that I feel I lose nothing in accuracy by borrowing some of her descriptions. I do this, and resort to the third person, primarily to provide myself with a little distance from the portrayal, without which I fear it would read like gushy romanticism.

He feels she is being fair and understanding. She is irritated at herself for thanking him for doing what he should have been doing all along anyway; she's proud of being "fair" but wonders if she's being a wimpy coward. Also she is irked at no longer being able to find (1) the rice, (2) the vacuum cleaner, and (3) her socks.

An Individual Excursion: He joins a men's group. He begins "relating" to men, going out for tea, and having intense, intimate conversations. He discovers that he really can talk to men. He makes male friends. She's glad he's no longer "depending on women for all his nurturing." After all, it was her that encouraged him to join the men's group. Secretly she wonders (and worries) what he's saying about her, and unsuccessfully searches the other men's faces for a clue. Somehow, it seemed O.K. for her to talk about him to her women friends, but she's not so sure she wants to extend the privilege.

The Feminist Prince: He begins buying and avidly reading feminist literature. He reads the newest feminist publications before she does and proceeds to explain to her how great this woman's ideas are and how she really must read this collection of feminist theory. He wins approval from her feminist friends. They tell her how lucky she is and eye him approvingly as the Feminist Prince. She reminds them they don't have to live with him. He is proud of How Far He Has Come, and she thinks he's getting arrogant, acting more-feminist-than-thou. She reminds him that he can never really understand what it is to be a woman in the world. Yet, she reminds herself, didn't she want him to be supportive, to read the works of feminists, to be as committed to feminism as she. They quarrel over what she calls his grandstanding and what he calls her defensive possessiveness.

A Feminist Awards Dinner: Her friends award her first prize for having made it, for creating a feminist prince and a feminist castle. She hopes they're right, but doubts it. She knows it looks pretty but feels the seams are rather fragile. But then she thinks, well maybe. . . .After all, they do still like each other and most of the other relationships she sees are total disasters. In public, they smile together, proud of being at the forefront of creating the New Relationship. In secret she sometimes panics at not having the slightest idea about what they're doing. Yet, it does seem to work.

The Second Landslide (more appropriately termed The Great Avalanche). He discovers that feminism pertains to their sexuality. She discovers that he really and truly has just discovered this. Chaos reigns. Nothing is straightforward anymore: who initiates

and how; the presence/absence of, approach to their foreplay; their individual and mutual passiveness, assertiveness, joy, and boredom; genital versus non genital sexuality; sexuality versus sensuality; fantasies, nonmonogamy; bisexuality; the fear of Doing Something Wrong, the self-consciousness of Doing Something Right. She doesn't know what she wants anymore. He doesn't know what she wants anymore. What happened to the good old days of spontaneity and fun?

The Third Landslide (or the Lesser Avalanche). He discovers that feminism pertains to their marriage. She discovers that he really and truly has just discovered this. They say they're getting married for purposes of immigration. They'd never be so "incorrect" out of choice. They write a very proper ceremony that is O.K'd by her feminist friends. He is questioned by her feminist group (to whom she is accountable), concerning his real motives for this marriage. He speaks. He cries. Her mother hovers upstairs, commenting, "Don't you think you're taking this a little too seriously, dear?" They detect some unhealthy romanticism in his attitudes toward marriage. (He loves her. That means attachment, possession.) She has been cleared--just. Many of them decide they will not attend the wedding.

The Edge of a Crevasse: He leaves to work in another city. She works and plays with women, her lone male friend gone. They see each other on some weekends. He begins to feel alien to her, like a member of a different species. He starts to panic and pursues her. She withdraws. They pretend it's not happening. They talk about it intensely. They're both overwhelmed by the vastness of this terrain, the possibility that it will not be chartered in their lifetimes. They come close to losing heart, giving up, dropping over the edge.

He Totters: He despairs. Nothing he's done--at cost to his pride, his dignity, his self-respect--has worked. Nothing's really changed. He's still a Man. He still believes in the "truth" of feminism, in its justice, in its capacity for changing people. He alternates between feeling martyrish, embracing the sins of all men, and feeling sorry for himself, feeling unfairly blamed when he's a Good Man who Tries Hard. He begins to sleep a lot. He's obedient, obsequious to her, given in, given over. His self-contempt grows. He can't return to his old self, but can't seem to manage a new self to the satisfaction of either of them. Life is joyless.

She Totters: She knows he's angry, although he doesn't know it yet. He's being too obedient to feel it. She feels guilty. She's destroyed him. She feels guilty at feeling guilty. He needed to be destroyed. She feels angry. Nothing she's done--at the cost to her pride, her dignity, her self-respect--has worked. Nothing's really changed. It's an impossible combination men and feminism, she'll switch to women. Where is the problem anyway? Men? Him? Feminism? Her? She becomes suspicious of her own motives. Maybe she's gone power mad. Maybe she's trying to please coldhearted, cynical feminists. Maybe she's been demanding too much of him, too fast. He has a good heart. He was such fun. They had such fun before it got complicated. Life is joyless.

The Eruption: He revolts. He is angry. He has Had Enough--with being an obsequious wimp, a doormat, a feminist prince astride a white dustmop. He's tired of feeling guilty and making reparations for Mankind, for just happening to be born one of Them. He's going to be a Person too, just like her. Since she doesn't' feel she's A Person yet in this relationship, his pronouncements infuriate, hurt, and terrify her. She says she never asked for obsequiousness anyway, merely sharing; she wants them both to be Persons; she is not interested in having power over him, but in doing away with it between them entirely. To herself, she wonders if this is true, feels at fault, feels enraged for feeling at fault again, meditates on whether it is really possible for two human beings to live together for their whole lives. (He is working in the city again; they're living together.)

The Catharsis: He yells. She yells. They yell together. He cries. She cries. They cry together. They cry a lot. They talk to each other and they listen. They laugh, tentatively at first; then they roar. They decide they do love one another and besides who said this would be easy anyway? She admits she prefers him alive than dead, even if he is less obedient.

Peaceful Waters: They decide they do enjoy living together. They decide it's O.K. to have some fun and some compassion in their being themselves, together. She doesn't want some other person to live with; she wants him with his heart and his idealism. He doesn't want some other person to live with; he wants her with her playfulness and her energy. There's some minor scars but more humour, more excitment, more challenge. This space bubbles with beads of sensation. The terrain ahead has a different hue, somehow, more gentle but certainly not any more familiar, and they move again towards

the Beginning.

Setting Out: . . .

Such is the context I bring to the task of creating meaning from these conversations.

E. Creating Meaning: interpreting the conversations

The process of creating a coherent fabric, that is, of giving meaning to a group of conversations, is not an easy one to describe.

The initial step involves being with the conversations, reading them, listening to them, opening to them, living them. This entails entering the world of the speaker, just as one might with a movie or a novel, living and creating that world through the filter of one's own history. In the process of coming to live each conversation, it seemed important, for me, to move back and forth between reading the transcripts and listening to the tapes. A written transcript provides the advantages of permanence and convenience but the written word is an alienation of language from its living power. Living sound offers the richness of pitch, emphasis, nuance and attitude, silence and expression. It provides a richness of expression capable of completely transforming the written word. It also facilitates a penetration of the silences, bringing meaning to what is not-said.

In the hermeneutic process of interpretation, what is not said is as important as what is said. The listener must open herself to the speaker's silences, to the gaps between the words, to that which is inferred but not stated, to the meaning that hangs suspended, that hovers just beyond what is verbally expressed. The aliveness of the spoken word, with its expression and nuance, with its inseparable connection to a speaker and her gestures, is fertile ground for hearing and understanding the un-said. Here is an illustration from Manon's conversation.

> He's made plans and has been saving money to move to the maritimes and he's bought a piece of land there and he intends to move there within the next year. And his plan is quite immoveable. It's fixed. And while I'm very welcome to come, and I feel welcome to come, I also know that if I had great objections, which I sometimes do. . .I don't like the way it's fixed. Part of what he says is that his life plan has to be important to him and he can't always ameliorate it to please those people around him, where sometimes I feel, maybe, he should. I

would. He should.

This is one of the many passages in which much of the meaning is lost in the transcription from spoken to written language. These words were said with intense feeling and expression--resentment and anger that Alain's plans are more important to him than his relationship with Manon; conflict about whether or not she will follow him; helplessness in the face of not being able to impact his plans in any way. Throughout this quotation there hangs a sense of Manon's perceptions of herself as secondary. The pictured future is not one shared or created together, but rather one in which she is invited to fit, more as an accessory than as an integral partner. And that hurts Manon. She speaks of being welcome to come, such as a visitor might be--a pleasant, added touch to the plan, but not essential. There hovers a sense of uncertainty in relation to the future. There is a strong inference that she does not, in fact, feel as free, as independent and as equal as she initially expressed. Manon also implies that, in contrast to Alain, she fits her plans around her relationships, that she would never give a plan more importance than an intimate relationship.

In speculating about the unsaid, one looks beyond the mere words of a passage and touches its silences. At the same time, one locates the passage within the greater context of the whole conversation, allowing the silences of the whole to speak and illuminate the expression of the part. Here is a second, perhaps more simple example, a quotation from Jan as she speaks about her experience of being feminist and heterosexual. She says

> It's very difficult. I especially feel sorry for those women who are now becoming aware and are involved with men. They have got an incredible struggle. I have been fortunate in my relationship with David, it's so wonderful because we see things so similarly. . . .It's hard, a very hard thing to be a feminist today and have a positive relationship with a man.

What hangs beyond words in this very straightforward passage? For me, there is an inference that Jan sees her relationship with David as exceptional, that she considers it unusual to find such harmony in intimate contact with a man. There is a sense that Jan sees her partner as different, as exceptional in relation to other men and there is the implication that she locates the source of disharmony within feminist, heterosexual relationships, in

men's different ways of seeing the world.

Thus, the initial step of making sense of these conversations is simply opening oneself to them, to their words and to their silences. In the second step, the conversations were divided according to topic. This involved bringing the writer's pre-understandings of significant issues together with the conversationalists' experience of significance in their life-worlds, such that eleven topics of conversation were identified. For every participant, the substance of each topic was then summarized. This process is illustrated in Table 1 which comprises part of Jean's discussion of those aspects of her relationship that she values and enjoys. This topic was ultimately called "Affirmation." The role of the questioner as she opens up a direction and asks for specific experiences, is also apparent in this example.

Table 1: Summarizing a Conversational Transcript: Topic - Affirmation

	Conversation	Summary Statements
J:	Well, I read somewhere about 51% relationships and I would say, we probably have an even more uneven balance of power than that. I'd say it's probably about a 59%.	J. feels she has the majority of the power in the relationship.
H:	Meaning?	
J:	That I have 59% of the power and he gets the remainder.	
H:	O.K. So that's one of the things you like about your relationship.	
J:	That's important to me.	
H:	O.K.	
J:	That's part of what makes me feel safe in it.	Important in allowing her to feel safe.
H:	Can you give me an example, a specific example, of where something like that might work?	
J:	Where the power would be obvious?	
H:	Yes.	
J:	I think in terms of priorities for our life together or the plans we have for the future, that I would set more of the tone and that I would probably have the final say in terms of priorities. If he wanted to do something and I didn't want to, that would probably rock the boat in my favor.	She has more say in setting priorities, future plans.
H:	O.K. Can you give me an example?	

J: In terms of travel, if I have an interest in learning something or in doing something that is available in a certain country and he has a different interest, he would compromise before I would. I can't see myself compromising and going with him. It has come into play, for example, when I've got a job in another city, when I've wanted to travel to a certain country. We go where I want to go.

For example, travelling, moving to another city, they go where J. wants to go.

H: And you know that?

J: We both know that.

H: What else do you like about the relationship? What is enjoyable in it?

J: I think that we have a lot in common. We have a lot of common interests.

Enjoy common interests, shared activities.

H Can you give me. . .

J: Sure, sure. Recreational interests. Going to folk festivals, the same kind of dances, the same kind of social occasions. I can drag him along to an art gallery or two. But for the most part, our idea of spending a Saturday together would be compatible. Our idea of what we want to do with that Saturday. We like, you know, going to flea markets or spending time with the same people. We're lucky we have friends in common. So that makes it easier to spend time together. We also have the same kinds of ideas about what a relationship should entail and it's not spending our lives in each other's pocket and not having separate interests. We have

Friends in common

Consensus about amount of time spent separately, spent together

separate interests and then we do things together as well.

H: Can you give me an example of that?

J: Well, for example, he's far more physical than I am so he'll play squash or go mountain climbing or whatever and that will be his thing. And the art gallery is maybe an example for me where I'll find friends to visit those kinds of exhibitions because he's not particularly interested.

H: O.K.

J: So that. . .I mean, I appreciate that, that we have the same kinds of interests and also the same interest in keeping separate lives as well as our life together.

H: Anything else that you appreciate about the relationship, value about it?

J: Well, just the type of person he is, as a man, the type of man he is. He is gentle. He is open to hearing from women. I think I recognized very early that he had a good attitude or a safe attitude towards other women.

Enjoy's M's gentleness
He's open to women's experiencing

H: Can you explain that more?

He has a safe attitude toward women
- doesn't flirt
- likes women
- independent
- no obsessive need for intimacy

J: Well, he's in no way flirtatious. He likes women, I'd say probably about the same amount as he likes men, which isn't. . .he's. . .I wouldn't say he's a loner but I'd say he's more independent of people than most people that I know. So he doesn't feel this dreadful need for company or for closeness either from men or from women.

But he has the same healthy needs, I would think, most people have for intimacy but not. . .he's not obsessive about it and I think a lot of men are. So I think he's safe to women in that way and he's certainly safe to me. And he's done a lot of learning and has been open to learning about feminism and about issues that hadn't even touched his life before this. There's a certain, I don't know if it's innocence or naivete but he has that about him and it makes him open. It makes him less defensive, or even, I would say, totally non-defensive.

Open to learning about feminism

Non defensive regarding a feminist view of the world

H Can you give me an example?

J: Well, just about anything we could bring up. Pornography is one example. He never thought about it. It had never touched his life. He'd never read it but he was open to learning about why it was dangerous and accepting of the reasons, you know, I and other people could give him. Sexual assault. . .anything that I or people close to us have been involved with. Language. Sexist language. Therapy. Things like that. They weren't things that had ever concerned him. He had lived a very, a rural basic type life. And he had been busy with other issues. So this was totally new for him and it wasn't even a basic interest of his but he was open to becoming involved because it was important to me.

Feminist concerns new to him

Opens himself to a feminist point of view because it's important to J.

H: O.K. Anything else?

J: He's very supportive of me. I think, of all people, he's probably most supportive of me. He doesn't have. . .he doesn't seem to have a jealous bone in his body. Like it almost seems like he would rather I do well in the world than he does. Like, he's quite content to be a good person and I can go out and be great. So he's very supportive in that way. He's very confident of my abilities. But he doesn't push me. When I go through times when I can't do anything, he seems to be sad about that. But not to feel that I'm copping out or that I'm holding back. And so I think a big part of it for me is that he is. . .well I have used the word, insurance policy but that's a bit cold. . .like I think, I rely on his support, on his sort of 24-hour, non-conditional support in a way that I can't rely on from people that I don't live with. Although I'm sure they would come and live with me if it was necessary. They obviously couldn't live with me forever.

Most supportive person J. knows

Seems more important to him that I do well than he does

Confident of my abilities

Supportive, not pushy when J. unable to do anything

J. relies on his 24-hr, non-conditional support

H: How does he do that? Can you talk a bit more about what he does that's supportive, how he supports you.

J: In bad times?

H: Good and bad.

J: Well, in good times I don't really need that much support. I need more like positive reinforcement or ego strokes or something like that. Like, he's proud of me.

Proud of me and tells me

H: How does he do that?

J: He's proud of me and I need that.

H: How does he show that?

J: He tells me. Like, he gets really excited when I feel I've achieved something or I've done something. You know, say I get a letter printed in the newspaper. He gets really excited. Or if I do some artwork that I think is good, he'll be really excited about it. He'll give me feedback inasmuch as he feels he can criticize and stuff. So I get that kind of support in good times. And in bad times, he'll give me whatever is needed. Sort of 24-hour care, you know.

Excited about J's accomplishments

Will give critical feedback in a supportive way

In bad times M. will give whatever is asked, needed

H: Such as. . .

J: Such as taking me around with him because I don't want to be alone. Speaking to people, explaining things to people that I don't feel that I can explain things to. Getting other help for me when I don't feel I can go out and get it on my own.

H: Anything else?

J: About support? About what I like?

H: Yeah.

J: Probably his value system is the most similar to mine that I've ever seen in a man around. . .the way we would like to see the world, around the issues we think are important. . .

Similar value systems, world view

H: Can you give me some examples of that too?

J:	O.K. Maybe pacifist issues or the kinds of things we like to see in a friendship, what we think relationships should have, like how we should relate to other friends, how. . .his perception of how women relate to one another in contrast with how men relate to one another and how he sees it as something to aspire to. . .that men should be so lucky as to be able to speak to each other the way women do. So those kinds of values which I. . .you know, I couldn't live. . .I'm a very intolerant person. I know it's hard to believe. But I certainly couldn't live with someone who would disagree with me widely on those things. I don't have energy or time or patience to change people and those are very basic kind of beliefs. . .	Could not live with someone whose basic value system was very different

The next step in the process of bringing meaning to these conversations, requires clustering similar summary statements together into essential, non-redundant themes. It is the purpose of the themes to capture and illustrate all important summary statements, without neglecting any, while at the same time revealing without repetition, the very kernal of the experience. In Table 1 a conversational transcript was condensed into a number of summary statements. Table 2 illustrates the clustering of these summary statements into unifying themes. From this example it is already apparent that three themes are beginning to emerge for the topic of Affirmation as it is brought to expression by Jean.

Table 2: Clustering Summary Statements into Themes: Topic - Affirmation

Summary Statements	Themes
J. has majority of power.	I. Nurturing
Power allows her to feel safe.	
J. has dominant say in decision making.	
M. validates her world view--is open to feminism and women's experience of the world.	
M. is supportive in good and bad times.	
M. is confident of J's abilities.	
M. is proud of J's accomplishments.	
Share similar interests, activities	II. Sharing
Friends in common	
Consensus regarding time together and time apart	
Share similar value systems	
J. is free to pursue her own interests.	III. Freedom

This procedure was followed for each participant, each conversation. Participants were then compared in order to locate, firstly, those themes that were common across their distinct being-in-the-world and secondly, those themes that were unique to their particular experience. When a theme was found to be unique to one or two participants, it was considered in light of their particular experience, the idiosyncratic aspects of their historical, personal, and material attributes. Chapter IV presents the themes, as they spoke to me, from hermeneutical conversations with seven women who described their experience of being feminist and living with a man.

IV. THE THEMES

Chapter IV presents a portrait of being feminist and intimate with a man, in a descriptive, phenomenological manner. It describes an experience of being-in-the-world at the confluence of feminism and heterosexuality. The lived experience of these women emerges through the presentation of eleven conversational topics, within which common and idiosyncratic themes are considered.

A. Affirmation

The first conversational topic to be considered is that of the affirming and supportive aspects of these women's relationships as perceived by the women themselves. In looking at this topic it becomes apparent that it embodies the realm of consensus within the partnership, that it spans the shared togetherness of these women in relation, in interaction with their male partners. This topic covers all those aspects that are perceived as being nurturing, supportive, loving, agreed upon. While women speak in different ways of their experiences in this respect, what is not said, but what emerges throughout this topic, is that this is the area of connection, of moving in rhythm, of non-effort. The commonality inherent within these women's experiences of affirmation in their relationships, is captured by four themes: nurturing, sharing, freedom, and challenge. A fifth theme, growing old, which was idiosyncratic to two women, is also discussed.

Nurturing

This first theme revolves around these women's experiences of being nurtured and supported within their relationships, experiences that were articulated by all seven women in their individual way. It abounds with words such as safety, trust, understanding, encouragement, support, and solidness. It embodies that which they can count on, lean on, that which is brought to their being together and seems to ask nothing in return. It appears to capture the haven in the relating, the foundation around which other interactions revolve. Nurturing represents that into which the women may melt when they need succour and that with which they may celebrate when they've achieved. It has to do with feeling loved and cared for, with knowing that one is valued and desired.

This theme comprised a number of different expressions. Firstly, these women spoke of feeling safe and protected, of being able to shelter here from some of the agonies of the outside world. There is a sense of finding solace in coming together with their partners, of knowing they will provide comfort and serenity. These are Jan's words:

> After a horrific day he can just put his arms around me, he's got long arms, you get a real hug from this man and you know, you just feel safe. Enveloped and safe. A port in the storm. It's beautiful.

The women expressed a sense of shared support, such that when one falters the other does also. They spoke of feeling truly valued and appreciated by their partners, of knowing that they are loved. These are women who know that they are very important to their partners, who feel esteemed and treasured by them. Toni says:

> I value his support tremendously. It's almost as though we're like Kahil Gibran describes as two pillars holding up a roof and if one is weakened, so the other weakens...he values me. He values me as a person. He values my opinions. I know I'm a very important part of his life.

Their conversations abound with references to their experience of trust in these relationships, their sense of solidness and security, their faith in a relationship not easily fractured. They perceive that their relationships will weather the storms of time together, will stand the stress of individual change. A richness of giving and caring is implied. Rachel describes it in this way:

> Trustworthiness. A sense of nonfracturability. There's a lot of peacefulness too that comes from the trustworthiness...I've never experienced such bottomless support, such giving and caring.

These women also spoke of their partners as being verbally loving, encouraging, and proud of them. The men speak their caring. They beam their pride. They are confident of the participants' abilities and excited when they succeed. Helen says:

> He has the capacity more than I have to say, 'I really care about you; I love you.'

Toni says:

> I actually find it embarrassing that in company he'll say she's wonderful. He's so proud of me you know.

and Jean speaks of her experience:

> He's very supportive of me. He doesn't seem to have a jealous bone in his body. Like it almost seems he would rather I do well in the world than he does. He's very confident of my abilities and he gets really excited when I feel I've achieved something important. He shows he's really proud of me.

A final aspect of this theme was the fact that these women felt supported in their feminism by their partners. On the whole, their world view was nurtured rather than criticized. Their experience in the world was listened to and acknowledged and their partners were open to learning about and understanding their being-in-the-world. A feminist definition of reality was considered rather than dismissed, accepted rather than rejected. Jan relates:

> Most of our bones of contention with the world come from my sexual politics or his racial politics. And they're so damn parallel, that he can talk about his experience and get really upset at the injustice of it all and I can be right there. And the same with me, I can just shake with all the injustice experienced by women, and, maybe because he's black he can really understand, so we're rarely at loggerheads with each other. It's one of the nicest things about this relationship. I've never experienced it with a man before.

Jean had this to say:

> He's open to learning about feminism and about issues that have never touched his life before. In fact, there's a certain innocence or naivete about him that makes him totally non-defensive about these issues.

Sharing

The second theme to emerge from the topic of affirmation is captured by the term sharing. This theme covers the many different threads of connection, of togetherness, the world created and shared in relation. As is apparent from the quotations, this theme revolves around the "we" and the "our," the being together of two individual persons, such that the focus on the "I" dissolves and the focus on the "we" emerges. All participants articulated experiences of sharing within their relationships. Some of these experiences were common, in a general sense, to all conversationalists. Others were quite individual.

One common experience of sharing to be expressed by each of these women was that of doing things together with their partners, sharing activities, interests, and a sense of values. That the men had similar value systems to them was important to all seven women although, with the exception of feminist issues, there was little similarity in articulation about exactly what was shared. Similarly, the activities and interests that these couples shared were as diverse as their personalities. They did, however, all share doing things, in common. For example, Jan says:

> We're both members of Citizens Against Racism and Apartheid. And we're both involved in the anti-pornography group. . . .We both have an interest in spiritual issues, in learning more about things like inner peace. . .sometimes we'll sit down and spend an evening reading a feminist book and then talk about the ideas, like we read Men's Liberation not so long ago.

And Manon speaks of her experience in this way:

> We mainly agree with each other's point of view, especially on issues that are important to us, like choices about our lifestyle, living in the country, growing our food, and the like. . .I think we have a great sense of humour together and I like the way we can act the fool. . .I always enjoy walking with him, camping, canoeing, that sort of thing.

A second commonly expressed experience of sharing was that of being able to talk together. These women unanimously articulated good dialogue, good communication as one of the positive aspects of their relationships. There was a sense of understanding each other, listening to each other, and being able to resolve difficulties without too much trouble; a sense that these couples could say what they needed to say and generally trust that it would be received with some openness. Maria had this to say:

> I guess one of the most positive things is that we're still here ten years later and we are friends. There's really good communication and dialogue within the relationship. Everything's talked out. We know where people are at. . .we have--we used to have them more regularly but we found out it wasn't necessary--we have about every two months now, especially if a crisis arises--we have what we call family council. And everybody gets to sit down and talk about where they're at and what they're afraid of, and what they want,

and how they feel about everything that's happening to them as peoples' lives progress around them. . .

Toni put it this way:

> The thing I value most of all is that we can have a disagreement and we never end up not talking to each other, that Sam can always say, 'I'm sorry, I see what you're saying' or that I can say to him, 'You know I'm sorry about that.'

These participants commonly expressed appreciation for a further aspect of the shared world they created and recreated together in their coupling, that is, consensus around being together and being apart, joining and separating, interacting with each other and interacting without each other. These women valued their time with their partners but also saw it as important to spend time by themselves, with their friends, immersed in their particular interests. One of the things they liked about their relationships was the agreement around spending time together and time apart. To quote Jean:

> We have the same ideas about what a relationship should entail in regard to having separate interests and doing things together as well. We share similar needs for separateness and togetherness.

Toni put it similarly:

> There's very much a togetherness and yet there's not the encroachment of space. Like, I know that I'm my own person. I don't have to be interested in everything he's interested in and he doesn't have to enjoy or participate in all the things I like.

These couples shared, of course, a mutual attraction. They shared liking each other, being drawn to the other, feeling that the other was special to them. As an aspect of having been together over time, the women spoke of the importance to them of a sense of shared history. Some of the women articulated this specifically. Others did not, but it hung clearly as a backdrop, as the unsaid illuminating the said. Maria used these words:

> The history to me is really important, the history of the relationship, how much time has been put into it, the ups and the downs, the changes---the memories that you shared together, the raising of children, it's all the little treasures, the nostalgia of sitting down and saying, oh man, do you remember when. . .

While being attracted to the other was a unaminously expressed aspect of sharing, two women, Jan and Rachel, spoke of the togetherness they shared with their partner in a very particular way. They talked of a strong nonverbal connection, an intense feeling of being in rhythm, or in sinc, the feeling of familiarity upon first meeting, a "natural" feeling of harmony in being with the other. For example, Jan says:

> Although the relationship is new, there's a strong feeling. . .this may sound weird to you but we believe we've been together before. . .whether we're talking or not talking there's such a feeling of being in sync. We're in rhythm together, somehow.

Rachel put it this way:

> He's a man, but our connection feels like a 'soul sisterhood.'

For five of the seven women, a shared sexuality was a valuable part of their being together with their partners. This was another context in which their individualness, their ~~separateness melted into the~~ background and their togetherness, their union emerged as the foreground focus. Manon says:

> We have great sex. It's fun and it's intense--some of our nicest times together are sexual.

Freedom

The third universally experienced theme to emerge from this topic is that sense the women had of being free to be, free to express themselves and expand their being-in-the-world. Put negatively, this theme refers to the absence of restriction or suffocation within their relationships. Although not articulated in so many words, the theme portrays a sense of flexible boundaries, movement and adaptability as opposed to rigidity; room for change, for trying things differently. Implied, is the sense that women have a feeling of power in terms of choices and decisions, a freedom to define themselves, their being, as they like, within a context of respect and appreciation.

These conversationalists speak unanimously of feeling free just to be themselves with all their particular idiosyncracies. They feel little pressure to "be like other women." Rather, they feel free to define themselves in a manner of their own choosing; they feel free to express their individuality in all of its richness, to say and do what feels true to

their hearts. For example, Helen says:

> What I value about our relationship is the right to be whoever I am and not have to be like other women of his experience or from his own background and culture. . . .So that opportunity just to be me, in my very own way, with no pressure to be different at all.

Manon puts it simply:

> I feel independent. . .I'm able to say what I want in the relationship and do what I want.

An aspect of feeling free for these women lay in knowing that someone had seen them at their worst and still loved and respected them; the freedom of not having to be perfect, of being able to be oneself complete with all of one's imperfections. This provides the room for honesty, for not having to pretend; a freedom from ill-fitting masks. Maria speaks of her experience in this manner:

> A friend is a person you can unload with, they care about you in spite of yourself, they don't just love you because of what they want you to be. . .and in my relationship, I believe there's a lot of that, that we both say, well this is who you are, this is who I am, and I like you, in spite of when you fall down, when you look stupid, when you bug me. . .

Jean muses:

> There's certainly a lot of comfort in knowing that he knows me well, that he has seen me at my best and at my worst. I enjoy his respect because he has seen me at my best and I also enjoy the honesty of knowing that he has seen me at my worst and he still thinks I'm pretty hot shit.

A more idiosyncratic aspect of this theme was expressed by one of the older participants, Helen. Helen's husband had had some difficulties with his health. She expressed relief and appreciation that he had taken care of himself, such that she was not ultimately bound to relinquish her freedom and become his caretaker. In taking responsibility for his health, Brian allowed Helen to maintain her freedom of movement with respect to their relationship. She says:

> I anticipate all the problems that will come out of that and selfishly feel I'll be waiting on him hand and foot and there's no way I wanna do that....I've said I'm

> not going to destroy myself to keep you going, to look after you, because you haven't looked after yourself...and that's a part of our relationship I guess I value...that he respects that too...and he's in very good shape...

Challenge

A fourth component of the affirmation topic was the expression, by participants, of feeling challenged and stimulated within their relationship; an acknowledgement and appreciation that they learn from being in interaction with their partners. The specifics of what was learned differed for each woman, but they commonly saw their being in partnership as providing a context for stimulating personal changes, for facilitating differences in themselves that they perceived as desirable. It seems that these women chose partners with skills and attributes that they valued and frequently, that they wished to acquire. Thus, their coming together offers, for them, challenge, stimulation, and the opportunity for change.

While there was little consistency amongst the particulars of what women felt they were learning within the context of being coupled with their male partners, there was an unexpected (for me) expression of exploring, for the first time, qualities that have been traditionally characterized as feminine. Thus, in speaking about being challenged by their partners, most women spoke of learning, not about fixing the car or how to canoe, but rather, spirituality, playfulness, patience, tolerance, and gentleness, for example. Certainly, the majority of these conversationalists were with partners whom they described as very gentle, as embodying typically female attributes. Accordingly, the learning they valued most appeared to be stimulated by the femaleness in these men. These are Rachel's words:

> I'm learning gentleness in this relationship. Ron has taught me how to resolve differences in a non-fight way. He's taught me how to solve a disagreement gently, with a full understanding that there's a lot of commitment here. . .as a result I think I'm much less interested in conflict, or competitive politics. . . .I'm much more interested in cooperating, in solving difficulties by establishing a common ground.

Jan speaks of learning a spirituality, a peace and softness, a fearlessness from David.

> I'm learning from him on the spiritual side. I'm learning a softness. You know, like, how inner peace is so important when you wanna deal with this shit that we have to deal with. He's just about got it. I haven't. So I wanna learn from that. . .and I watch him and I see he is almost fearless. For me, one of the biggest things is to become fearless. So, that's one thing that I'm trying to work on.

Jean describes her experience in this way:

> I learn not so much from listening to him, ,but more from watching him, just from seeing how he copes with day to day life and certainly, daily crises. It's not so much how to fix something or how to get into the house when you're locked out, it's how he does it. Like, if I was locked out of the house I would scream. Then I'd work out who to blame. Then I'd complain a lot about how cold it is. The last thing I'd do is probably work on getting into the house. If he was locked out of the house he would find some tools, take the window out, whatever. But he would do it with such a. . .a softness, I guess, with seemingly endless patience. . .and although I don't think I've learned that yet, I'd certainly like to.

Another thread to run through the experience of challenge as it was articulated by these women, was that of consciously choosing men with qualities they admired, choosing partners whom they thought would stimulate personal change in themselves. For example, Helen speaks of deliberately considering what she might learn from Brian before they were married, of realizing that he would balance her serious nature and sedentary tendencies, of seeing that he would encourage her to play and to try new activities. She says:

> The fun things the kids would say they did with their Dad. He's the one who wants to go skiing, hiking, buy cars. He has served that function in our relationship. I remember even when I was thinking about marriage, I thought, here's someone who will push me into fun things. And that's good for me because it's easier for me to stay at home and read a book.

Jean recalls deciding to pursue her relationship with Mike:

> I have used the word insurance policy, but that's a bit cold. . .I chose him

> because of his stability, his solidness. . .he's totally dependable, reliable, never in a flap. . .me, I'm always in a flap. I'm just the opposite. I'm either exuberant or freaking out. I knew he would balance me. I hoped I'd learn to be more like him in that respect and I knew that if I didn't, I could depend on his stability when I was feeling chaotic.

Growing older

The first four themes capture the commonality inherent in these women's experiences of affirmation within their relationships with their male partners. The fifth theme, growing older, is idiosyncratic to the two older participants in the study. It was not evident for the younger women and, therefore, appears to be related to increasing age. Helen and Toni were both in their middle to late fifties. Hand in hand with their articulations about valuing the affirmation extant in their relationships, came a concern for how things might be different should one of them die. An appreciation of their togetherness brought a contemplation of possible aloneness. The two seemed intricately intertwined.

Helen comments that concern about being left alone is expressed primarily by her partner. In considering being on her own, she feels she is sufficiently independent to manage. Yet in speaking of the pleasure she experiences in her relationship, she inevitably comes to reflect upon the termination of significant relationships, and the consequences. She says:

> My parents have died in the last ten years so we've gone through significant relationships terminating and Brian says frequently, I really care about you, I don't know what I would do if you go before me. My answer is, you'll manage. And for me, I think, I'll manage. I'm independent and I can live without a man.

Toni, on the other hand, speaks of a growing dependence on her partner for some of the more practical aspects of their being together. An appreciation of Sam's support inevitably leads to a musing about how she would cope were she ever left without that support. She says:

> We feel very much for each other; we still enjoy being together and sometimes I get scared, what would happen, you know, if he does die. Even in terms of practical things. He's made life easy for me and I've become more

dependent on him recently--you know, medicare, taxes, forms, etc. I never worry about them. He does them and leaves me time to do my things.

B. Ambivalence

The second conversational topic to be considered is that of ambivalence. This might be summed up by the phrase, "there's two sides to every coin." It encompasses those aspects of the relationship that are at times loved and at times hated. It appears to turn on the hub of difference between the two partners, and to revolve around the boundaries of the relationship, covering that grey area of movement between consensus and nonconsensus. Four common themes cover these participants' experience of ambivalence in their relationships; maleness, challenge / support, complement / balance, and for those who were mothers, children.

Maleness

These women commonly expressed their ambivalence about some of those things that are intrinsically male, the masculine being-in-the-world. Maleness, on the one hand, drew them, attracted them, interested them, offered a promise of exploration, learning, being intrigued. Yet, on the other hand, there was always the knowledge that this difference might present its other face, the possibility of disconnection, separateness, seeing a stranger where once there was a friend. Maleness embodies the very essence of difference. As such, it holds at one and the same time, the two unpredictable possibilities of being drawn to and being repelled from. One can never be quite sure which face will present itself. Manon speaks of her experience:

> I feel betrayed or separate from him sometimes; he feels distant, like one of them and then I feel angry. Sometimes it's just the way he looks, you know, his size, his voice. Other times I love that maleness, the same size, the same voice, it's very exciting.

Maria articulates her feelings with these words:

> Here's the twinness again. I love them and I resent them. I love and resent their assurance, their lack of fear, the way, you know, they'll sit with their legs crossed and be in command of a room and laugh too loud. . . . I love and resent

> how they're not tormented by their biology, the way life seems so simple for them, the way they hang on to being young and goofy and silly so that it makes you want to box their ears. . .

A specific aspect of maleness, that these conversationalists unanimously expressed their ambivalence towards, was men's perceptions of the world and the way they expressed them in conversation. At times women were intrigued by and learnt from these different expressions of being-in-the-world. At other times they were merely left with a sense of frustration, irrelevancy and disconnection. Jean elaborates:

> Our language is different. Men just don't communicate verbally the same way women do. The men I know don't seem to have the flights of fancy that women do, the crazy humour, outlandish conversations about dreams and hopes and paranoias. . .they seem to have different ways of dealing with the abstract. It's like they're so academic whereas women will just go at it without much reserve or self consciousness. Sometimes I'm fascinated by the way men speak of the world and I do learn things. Then there's the times when everything they say is full of irrelevancies, red herrings. . .

And Helen had this to say:

> At times we'll be discussing an issue and he brings in irrelevancies from my perspective--they aren't for him, but I can't make the connection. And it drives me up the wall. I just shake my head and say what's this got to do with it. . .then at other times, I love the way he sees the world; it brings something new for me.

Complement/Balance

This second theme captures the conversationalists' articulations about some of their partners' personal qualities that they both love and hate. These are often characteristics that first attracted the women to their partners, characteristics that represent the complement of their own personal style. Again, the notion of difference is strongly implied. The ambivalence is captured in the coming together, on the one hand, of the promise of learning something new, the promise of becoming like, the enjoyment of difference, and on the other hand, the sense of being unlike, the reality of being out of

step, moving to different rhythms, that clash of difference in style. While this was a theme universally expressed by all participants, the particular form of its expression was completely idiosyncratic. Here are three examples.

Helen speaks of her and Brian's different approaches to money. He is easy with it and she is careful with it. While his style annoys her at times, she also knows that at other times it serves as a catalyst in allowing herself an occasional economic indulgence. She says:

> You know, with every positive there's a negative. Brian enjoys spending money. I'm a spendthrift. I was going to say I dislike the way he spends money, and I do, but I also know it gives me permission to spend money, to enjoy money that I would just hoard, to go on a vacation, buy a dress, whatever. He's easy come, easy go with money. I'm too practical and he balances that.

Jean provides a second example. Part of her initial attraction to Michael was his involvement in recreational activity in the face of her feeling that she was destined to be permanently uncoordinated. His ability in an area in which she feels very unable, creates some strongly ambivalent feelings for her--noticeably admiration and resentment. She speaks:

> I've always been attracted to his grace, his outdoorishness, the fact that he knows about camping and hiking and cross-country skiing. . .often, I think, this is a great opportunity for me to learn. . .other times, I won't do anything with him, I feel totally incapable, like he's always waiting, and how can he really want me along. . .and at those times I totally resent his ability, I don't enjoy it at all.

Jan speaks to this theme in a slightly different way. As a woman who is constantly confronted with the pain of other women's situations, she has learned to control her emotional involvement; she has learned not to feel too much. Part of what she loves about her partner, David, is his capacity to feel, a quality that she has rarely found in other men. On the other hand, the intensity of his affective reactions cause her distress. She explains her ambivalence about his sensitivity in contrast to her greater control.

> Sometimes I wish I could change, a little bit, his sensitivity. Not too much, because I love it too. It's very special. But sometimes, like if we see a film

that's really painful, I can see the hurt in his eyes. I mean, I shouldn't say, too sensitive, but it bothers me. He's gotta learn to control the emotional involvement. You've gotta learn that for survival. Sometimes I just think his heart will break, his pain is so intense.

Challenge / Support

The third area to create ambivalence within these relationships was that of the balance between challenging and supporting. Participants were divided amongst those who appreciated the support and nurturance they received from their partners, but wished, at times, for more challenge, and then those who loved the challenge but yearned at times for silence, or unquestioning support. That is, sometimes they enjoyed the challenge or the support; other times they wished their partners would act differently. Ambivalence arises on a second account within this theme. It is located in difference in the sense that the women whose style is predominantly challenging tended to be with men who are supportive and non-confrontive. These women appeared to react to their partners' differing style with both appreciation and irritation. On the other hand, the women whose style is predominantly supportive and non-confrontive seemed to be partnered with more challenging men. These women appeared to react to their partners' challenging with a mixture of appreciation and frustration. Challenge / support was a theme articulated by five of the seven participants.

The ambivalence inherent in the theme was most clearly expressed by Maria and Jean who consciously chose their partners for the safety and support they offered, the unchanging calmness and solidity. Both women have had a deep appreciation for this aspect of their relationships. They chose a context of security which allowed them to make the changes they wanted. However, over time they began to yearn for more than support in their relationships, to seek challenge and stimulation. At the time of these conversations they spoke of valuing the support but desiring more of a challenge from their partners. These are Maria's words:

When I met Peter, I had come out of a marriage where I was battered, from a childhood where I was abused and Peter was really safe and calm, a place that provided a lot of gentlenesss, comfort, and all those things where I could be

> safe and finally grow a little bit...and then I was doing all the changing--bringing information home, brow beating, initiating change, putting out all the emotional energy, taking all the risks. He doesn't bring a new object, idea, anything in. And sometimes it's like, boring, where I think, come in with something. People say I have this wonderful guy and I'm falling asleep because he's...what's he doing? He's bouncing off me. He's taking all his direction from me.

Rachel came to her relationship through what she describes as a "soul sisterhood" connection with her partner. While far from bored within her partnership, she also feels that Ron is generally too accepting, not sufficiently challenging with her. She acknowledges that his support has been instrumental in facilitating important changes for her, but sometimes feels that a little more constructive criticism would do her no harm. She comments:

> What you gain in mutual support, you lose in self examination. He's too tolerant towards me. And while I really, really appreciate the support, what isn't there is the questioning, the challenging. . .

For two of the other participants, the focus was on the opposite end of the spectrum. While appreciating the challenges their partners provide, they longed at times for a little less challenge and a little more support. Manon and Toni acknowledge learning from their partners' questioning, debating, putting from alternate ideas. Sometimes, however, they yearn for an unquestioning acceptance of what they have to communicate. They wish their partners would react differently. Manon had this to say.

> He loves arguing, questioning. He just finds it fun, he learns some, and I feel like I've been reduced to rubble. . .certainly, sometimes I learn things, but it's rarely playful, a game for me.

In speaking of her experience, Toni says:

> When I say to him, look I handled this really well, he'll come back with well, maybe you should have talked to this person, or written a letter or made a diagram to make it even better. Sometimes that's great. I get a bunch of new ideas. At other times I just want to be left alone and have him say, that's great.

Children

The fourth common area of ambivalence for these women was their partner's interactions with their children. Of the four women who had children, three--Maria, Toni, and Helen--were both appreciative and critical of the men as fathers. At times they approved of their interactions with the children; at other times they disapproved. The women enjoyed their partners' interactions with their daughters and sons when the men were nurturing, and gentle--when they exhibited those qualities typically attributed to the "good mother." However, there was also an awareness that the men interacted differently with their children than they did, that the men provided experiences that they did not provide. This was viewed in both a positive and a negative light. On the positive side, their partners introduced their children to rewarding opportunities that would not have been available in their absence. On the other hand, the men sometimes related to the children in ways that these women did not like. For example, at one point in our conversation, Maria praised her husband's fathering.

> I value his relationship with the children, how he sees himself as a nurturing person, that he believes that women aren't the only nurturers. . .and that he accepts the challenge really of being a single parent a lot of the time because I'm away a lot.

While at another point in the conversation, these were her words:

> Sometimes I don't like the way he acts with the kids. I don't think he's as empathetic as he could be, although that's my judgement. . .I would take time to find out where that reaction's coming from. And he orders them, and they'd say well. . .and he won't hear.

A second example comes from Helen who relates her experience in this way:

> He's been a good father. The fun things the kids would say they did with their dad. . .(but) I remember there were times when I didn't like the way he was dealing with the kids. He would let them walk all over him then all of a sudden blow up. Or make value statements about, that was a dumb thing to do. . .

Jan was the exception amongst these mothers. Unlike the others, she was wholly supportive of her partner's interactions with her teenage daughter, constantly describing him as caring, gentle, and understanding with her child.

C. Difficulty

This conversational topic embodies those aspects of the relationship around which there was some struggle--those areas of difficulty or nonconsensus within the interrelating. The specific content of nonconsensus was, of course, somewhat different within each relationship. However, women articulated their feelings, their reactions to the discord in a very similar manner. Whether the particular realm was sexuality or a difference in values, nonconsensus resulted in strong feelings of disconnection, separation, and distinction for these women, a sense of being alienated and out of harmony with their partners. An accompanying sense was that of restriction and immoveable boundaries. These were the areas in which change appeared difficult or impossible to implement, areas in which there was a persistent return to an ineffective solution, or a resignation, a "putting up with things." The solution unanimously introduced by each of these conversationalists was that of discussion, an articulation of their perspective and an attempt to initiate their partners into their perspective so that the difficulty dissolved. Typically, of course, the attempted solution was unsuccessful and so the issue in question becomes entrenched as a difficulty in the relationship. When compared to other topics, the particulars of this topic appear more idiosyncratic to each relationship. However, three commonly shared areas of discord did emerge with some strength--values, affective expression, and sexuality.

Values

The first refrain to be expressed by these women in terms of difficulties within their relationships was that of differing values. When their partners differed from themselves in attitudes or priorities, the women again experienced feelings of disconnection and separateness in their relationships. This was true for each of the conversationalists, although there was little commonality in regard to the actual differences which precipitated these feelings. The range was as diverse as aesthetic taste to the value of the relationship.

It was Toni who bemoaned the fact that she and her husband did not share similar taste in clothes, furniture, painting, and the like. What she described as his lack of aesthetic appreciation, conjured up realms of separateness for her, in their relationship.

She does not like not being able to share the joy of a new dress or a new painting with him. She ponders:

> I cannot say, look what I've bought and have him enjoy it with me. . .eventually he might notice and remark, oh that's new, where I might have worn it six times. . .we can't share that sort of thing. We couldn't buy a painting, furniture together. Our tastes differ. And if he saw something half price, even if he didn't like it, he would buy it.

A second example is provided from Maria and Peter's being together. For them, a repeated discusssion of their differing spiritual values is guaranteed to lock them into an area of nonconsensus. Typically, this is a discussion that is precipitated by the presence of Peter's parents, and it has as much to do with Peter's interactions with his parents around religious issues as it has to do with differences in the couple's actual beliefs. Maria speaks of her experience:

> Unresolved issues. . .it's the spiritual. . .it has to do with his coming from fundamentalist Christianity while my spirituality leans far more to what you could call paganism. . .it usually comes up when his parents are around, like, his mother would say things like, gee I wish your kids would go to church on Sunday, and she'd have big weeps about her children and grandchildren going to hell. . .Peter would be quiet, not say anything, so I'd be the one who would have to put myself on the line and say what I thought. . .he'd never support me, it was as if he was just apathetic. . .it comes and it goes. . .I get angry, or I used to more, but it doesn't seem to change.

For Manon, her and her partner's differing values about the relative importance of the relationship precipitates her feeling apart from, alienated from Alain. Her greatest sense of restriction and lack of harmony come from her perception that for Alain, his life plans take precedence over their relationship, while for Manon, the relationship stands first. She says:

> Alain has made plans for himself and, while I feel part of the plans, I don't feel that I'm really an integral part. I feel secondary. . .part of what he says is that, his life plan has to be important to him and he can't always ameliorate it to please those people around him, where sometimes I feel maybe he should. I

would for him. He should for me.

Once again, for the two older women, there was expression of a shared experience not articulated by the other participants. Both Helen and Toni spoke about the recurrent teasing of their partners in social situations, a teasing which they perceive as a discomfort with their feminism and a desire to be "one of the boys," on the part of their husbands. The teasing frequently took the form of dissenting attitudes or unexpressed complaints, a differing of values that was rarely apparent in their private being together. This behaviour on the part of the men left the women feeling different emotions, but always disconnected, out of sinc with their husbands. Toni described it with these words

> The times that I can recall when I just land up hating him is when he takes an attitude in company of being insensitive and righteous, disagreeing with me and everybody. . .he would embarrass me a lot, with these women and these feminists, they don't know what they're talking about. . .or, don't tell anybody, because the guys will gang up against me, you know, stupid things like that, and I just hate him then.

Helen relates her experience in this way:

> Sometimes he'll make playful kinds of jokes in the presence of other people I don't like one bit. And although we've talked about it again and again, it comes up periodically. . . .For example, we were talking about changing roles and Brian's becoming the cook and the cleaner uppper. And he said, the one thing that bothers me is when she cleans up after I've cleaned up. It isn't good enough. And he joked about, you know, my wife the perfectionist. . . .I don't like being viewed as the bitch in the presence of other people. If he wants to tell me in private, that's fine. For me, it's that, I see it often, with men who make jokes about their wives and are constantly putting them down. And it's part of my old concern about, no man's gonna treat me like that. So that bothers me.

Affective expression

The second commonly articulated area of difficulty within these women's relationships, was their experience, at times, of their partners' emotional expression or

lack, thereof. This was a theme that was important for five of the seven participants. The difficulty is created in each case because the participants wish their partners would behave differently, express themselves in another way, and yet, despite discussing their feelings, no change appears to be forthcoming.

For Toni and Manon it was the men's expression of anger and aggression that created tension for them. Toni is very uncomfortable when Sam is upset or hurt and voices his anger about the situation in her presence; when he captures her as an audience in the release of his anger. Manon has difficulty with her partner, Alain's, affective expression in relation to his style of arguing. She frequently finds, what he might call a discussion, aggressive, dogmatic, and upsetting for her. Toni speaks of her experience in this way:

> I find it very, very difficult to deal with hate. And when he's really getting into periods where he can't stand something, or one of our friends, or he's been really hurt, the hate and the venom that comes out of him is just something I can't deal with. . .I'll walk away, you know, and he'll talk and talk and I won't listen to him anymore. . .or I'll walk into the kitchen or somewhere where I can still hear him, but don't have to look at him and I'll pull faces and tongues--I get out a lot of feelings that way. . .you know, I feel like I've been stabbed when he's like that. I can't bear to hear it. I want to run away. There's so much anger, so much venom. The sarcasm, it makes me shiver.

Manon had this to say:

> I feel most powerless when Alain is loud, when he argues loudly and angrily, when he interrupts and doesn't listen and is just loud.

For Jan, difficulty arose from her partner's sudden changes in mood, which she found unpredictable and disconnecting. It was disconcerting for her to feel together with her partner one minute, and then separate because of his withdrawal, the next minute. She says:

> The only thing I would like to change is that I wish he could tell me that his moods were coming on. . .it's just so awful when you're out of sync. . .one minute we're just flowing along, and then the next minute he's quiet and withdrawn. . .it just throws me for a loop, and if he could say, well, it's

coming, so that I could be forewarned. . .

It was not the way in which their partners expressed their feelings that caused difficulty for Maria and Jean. Rather, it was the men's lack of affective response in the face of the women's emotional expression, that created for them feelings of disconnection and resentment. Both women felt that they could cry, scream, and throw a tantrum without eliciting much emotional response on the part of their husbands. The men remained endlessly cool, calm, and passive, a fact which was sometimes a source of severe discontent. Maria describes her feelings:

> I suddenly saw that women did a lot of emotional living for men. And it made me angry. I thought, man, if I sit down and explain four times, he doesn't even have to ask. If I scream and yell and weep, he doesn't have to weep. If I get incredibly upset about whether or not the relationship is coming or going or dying, then it's all been taken care of. He can just sit there and listen and then go away and say, boy, women are loud, anxious creatures.

Sexuality

Sexuality had created, or was creating some difficulty for four of the seven participants in this study. For Toni and Helen, the two older conversationalists, sexuality was at times a difficult aspect of their relationship during the initial years of being with their partners. Although in the last few years, they have both developed a new comfort with, and appreciation of, their shared sexuality, this had been an area of some discord for much of their married lives. Helen speaks of her experience:

> Brian's a very physical person. I have never been. I was not involved sexually before I was married. Even in my day I think that was unique. My needs were often, the children are awake, the children will hear us. Brian couldn't care less. I was very private and very modest and very shy as a young person. I'm slower to be aroused also. So that I remember, early on at times in our marriage thinking, well, more of the same. Men get the rewards. And we women continue to accomodate. And feeling some resentment. . . .It has changed over the years. Brian can't perform the way he used to, his needs aren't so great. We're more compatible in our needs now.

Both Helen and Toni saw themselves as sexually shy for the first years of their marriages. Sex tended to be experienced as a pressure rather than a pleasure. There was an element of demand around sexuality, simply because their husbands desired to be sexual more frequently than they did. It was that desire and the feeling that they were expected to comply, that created difficulty for these women. Toni reminisces:

> At first, what Sam regarded as marriage was that you could have sex whenever you wanted it. This was, for me, difficult because this is what I also thought should happen and yet I used to feel that this was a demand on me and that there was something wrong with me. . .I used to go to bed before, thinking, oh my God, is he going to want it, should I delay going to bed and hope he falls asleep. All that sort of thing. . . .What I like about it now, is that his sexual drive has died down a bit. . .we're both much more relaxed about sexuality.

For two of the younger women, Jean and Maria, sexuality was currently a difficult aspect of their relating. Jean and her partner, Mike, rarely have sexual intercourse. Jean has little sexual attraction for Mike and sexual intimacy is a matter of despair, and surviving the encounter. She says:

> I have this negative feeling about being sexual with him, like I have to get over this hump. I kind of have to switch off and grit my teeth until we're right into it and hope that something physical will take over. And even if it does I still know that I've blocked out something. We rarely have intercourse. I just don't feel open to him sexually.

Jean enjoys her relationship except for its sexuality. Maria, on the other hand, is bored with her partner, and feels that her lack of sexual interest in Peter reflects her general lack of stimulation in their relationship. She comments:

> The sexual part of it ain't great. . .if I'm turned on mentally and spiritually, all those things, then sexuality just falls in tow. . .but I'm bored here. We both have our own rooms. We're sexual together once in a blue moon.

D. Task Division

One theme captures the common experience of these women in relation to the division of household tasks and chores between them and their partners. There was considerable uniformity amongst the participants' experiences within this realm.

Unstructured

For all women but one, the division of household tasks was largely unstructured. These women trusted their partners to share equally in the chores and there was little routinization of task division. Either one of the couple might complete any task and there was a faith that the men would firstly see that something needed to be done, and secondly, take responsibility for doing it. Alternately, there was the knowledge that if the men did not notice that something needed to be done, they would certainly respond when it was brought to their attention. However, these women perceived that their partners shared equally in household tasks largely as a result of the men's own initiative. Maria had this to say:

> It seems to me, most of the time to be very fair and there isn't a stringent agenda. But Peter is the type of person who will, if he sees something needs to be done, or hears something needs to be done, he doesn't have any problem jumping up and doing it. . .he's just sensitive to these things.

Apart from being equally shared, the division of household chores was spontaneous and flexible. A task was undertaken when it was apparent it needed doing. On the whole, there seemed to be consensus within couples about just when it became "apparent" that a chore needed completion. If any structure was to be gleaned, it was a structure loosely based on preference and individual differences in attention. The women tended to complete the tasks they preferred while the men unndertook the chores they enjoyed (or tolerated). Similarly, the women tended to clean where they noticed dirt (and were annoyed by it), while the men cleaned where their attention was drawn. Jan comments:

> I'd rather do dishes than cook. But that's about the only structure we have. Inasfar as laundry and stuff like that, when the basket gets full, then someone does it, you know, so a lot of stuff around here is when the spirit moves you. Whatever needs to be done, whoever's closest does it.

Flexibility, differences in attention, and a sense of equality are also evident in Toni's words.

> If he notices anything he'll do it and it's really funny how there's certain things that he will notice and certain things I will notice. So I clean up the things that upset me and he cleans up the things that upset him. And it balances out.

The division of household tasks was not experienced as an area of difficulty for any of these women, except Manon. For the other women, there was an assumption that tasks would be shared equally and that their partners would participate, so that the whole issue rarely captured much of their attention. However, Manon's experience differed. Domestic tasks were carefully structured in her household in an attempt to generate equality in that area. However, even with (or maybe, because of) rigid attempts to organize the division of chores, Manon felt that she was inevitably left with the bulk of the work. She speaks of her experience in this way:

> The one thing that was hardest to sort out for us was the dishes. . .one of the things we tried was that we would clean up after ourselves after each meal but what would happen is that he would clean his knife, his fork and his plate but if I had made the supper the rest of the dishes would be there and it would be assumed that it was my task to do all that other stuff. . .there just didn't seem to be any resolution for ages.

With the exception of Manon, it was apparent that these conversationalists experienced consensus in terms of their shared task division. This was an area of flexibility and little difficulty. The inherent flexibility was especially obvious when participants spoke about some of the changes in their lives. The relative division of household chores was very responsive to external changes in individual's lives, so that as the demands of work and school, for example, fluctuate, so too does the division of tasks. At one time one partner may carry the majority of the load; at another time, it may be the other partner's turn. For example, Rachel says:

> Things have changed because of my being in school now. . .in fact, I think Ron does more of the housework than I do, especially now. He will often fix dinner, do the dishes, and clean the house while I'm studying.

This fluctuation was certainly evident within the experiences of the older participants.

While most of the women entered their relationships with an assumption that tasks would be shared, this was not true for Helen and Toni. When first married, about thirty years ago, these two women were primarily responsible for the house, but over their years of being together with their partners, they have also moved to a shared and unstructured division of household tasks. To quote Helen at some length:

> Soon I'd had enough of little people and just had to go back to work for my own survival. He said, well, that's fine but I don't want anything to change for me. . .you know, don't expect me to come home and do the cooking, etc., etc. And I said, fine, I'll only work part-time to begin with and see how it works. . . .I'm well organized so I did all the cooking the night before and for a long time things didn't change very much. But before long Brian was rushing around helping me make the beds etc. . .he's a reasonable human being, when he saw the load was heavy, he just pitched in and helped. . . .Now that I'm still working and Brian's retired, our roles are really changing. Right now, he is doing the grocery shopping and much of the cooking and cleaning and organizing our recreational activity and I used to do all of those things. My share at the moment is, I shop together with Brian on the weekends if I want to; if I don't want to, I don't. I houseclean, change beds, etc., if I want to. If I don't want to, I don't.

Women have often been heard to remark that they may as well vacuum the rug or clean the bathroom themselves. When their male partners do it, they merely have to redo the task. As an interesting aside, within this theme, about half the women commented that their partners clean and generally attend to household chores as carefully as they do. For example, Jan says:

> He does a thorough job when he's cleaning. You know, often, you'd say, well geez, I wish my partner'd help me out and when he does you wanna go round and do it again because it hasn't been done the right way. . .the first time I watched him, he was doing the kitchen and if I hadn't known that he'd done it I would have thought I had. The guy's a perfectionist. He cleans as well as I do.

The other women comment, however, that their partners generally don't clean as thoroughly as they do, but that they've come to accept, or at least, adapt to that. It no

longer represents a serious problem for them. Helen elaborates:

> We do have different standards but I've become much more tolerant. He does a pretty good job, but every now and then I will vacuum, for example, and then I know it's done the way I want it done. Like, you know how dust collects along the baseboards unless once in a while you go after that particular area. He doesn't see that. He runs the vacuum cleaner over the carpet. So every now and then I will do it. And that's O.K.

E. Economics

As with the previous topic, this issue revealed a great deal of similarity amongst participants' experience. The essence of a consideration of economics is captured in one theme, economic independence.

Economic Independence

All of the women in this study, but one, were financially independent of their partners. Manon had some financial independence but did rely on her partner to help with the rent and other expenses. All women, but Helen, had their own, separate bank accounts. Helen and her partner shared joint accounts. Apart from their individual bank accounts, most women shared joint accounts with their partners, to which they contributed equally or according to income when there was a significant difference in earnings. These accounts tended to exist for specific purposes such as household expenses or a holiday. Jan describes her and her partner's arrangement:

> We have our own separate savings accounts. I have a chequing account. He has a chequing account. We just opened a joint savings account not too long ago. We're going to Trinidad so. . .

A couple of women, Toni and Maria, actually had signing power on their husbands' accounts, while their husbands have no access to their accounts. In both cases there was some difference in income between the women and their partners, and the women used their money primarily for their own pleasures. Toni relates:

> He always considered what I earned to be my money and I could do with it what I wanted. The money he earned was our money and he was going to see

> to our future and see to our immediate expenses and that sort of thing. So with my money I would often buy clothes, or furniture, or presents. . . .I've got signing power on all his accounts. He hasn't on mine. It just worked out that way. . .and I've always earned less than he has.

All participants in this study contributed to rent, groceries, utilities, entertainment, holidays, and the like, either equally or according to income. That is, they shared their joint expenses. Sometimes this was a loose and flexible arrangement, dependent on each person's affective assessment of whether or not they are contributing their fair share. More often it entailed a carefully organized system to ensure that individuals contributed according to the agreed upon arrangements. Rachel says:

> We have a joint household account and each week we contribute according to income. We split the rent equally. With food, it's according to income, so each week we pay 10% into the fund. And then we have our separate accounts as well.

The importance of work and accompanying economic independence was one of the strongest themes to emerge through the course of these conversations. All participants spoke of the importance of work as being an integral foundation for many of the positive aspects of their relationship--feeling safe, equal and free, having a balance of togetherness and separateness. A job provides money which in turn provides the possibility of choice. Choice entails notions of freedom, of personal power and personal control, the ability to create one's life-world.

> Having a job gives me money to do what I want, to have a car and be mobile, to feel independent, to give me the choice of leaving if things aren't going well. I feel safer and can be more open in the relationship when I know I don't need it for my survival.

This theme contains an inherent negativity. The importance of economic independence is articulated most strongly by women who have experienced periods of economic dependence. Out of the negative the positive is illuminated. Out of the experience of dependence, the experience of economic independence can be seen more clearly. All women in this study currently had some measure of economic independence. This was least true for Manon and accordingly, some of her experiences, particularly

within the realm of task sharing, differed somewhat from those of the other participants. While for other couples, even those with some difference in income, the sharing of expenses was conceptualized as being "according to income," Manon perceived her contributions as being subsidized by those of her partner, and she certainly perceived her partner as seeing things this way--providing a subsidy that entailed a certain cost. Thus, Manon's differing experience in task division appears to be related to the fact that her economic situation differed, or at least was conceptualized differently from that of the other women in this study. Because she was "dependent" upon her partner to pay some of her basic living expenses, he in turn expected that she would be responsible for the majority of their housework. There was pressure on Manon to unquestioningly do their domestic chores. The experience for her was one of conflict, resentment, and restricted freedom. She says:

> The hardest thing for us was the dishes. I think a lot of it had to do with the circumstances when I moved into the house, because my rent was really cheap and in a way he was helping me at a time when I was financially troubled, so I moved in and didn't pay much money and did what I considered was my share of duties as it were, and all the dishes just wasn't one of these and we would often let dishes just pile and pile. . .he said that if it were he that was living under my circumstances for $50 a month rent that I was paying, that he would be hard pressed not to do the dishes, in gratitude for the good things that were happening to him. . . .I would fight about doing them because that really felt like being tied underfoot, almost.

In the past, many of the women in this study had experienced periods of economic dependence due to the birth of a child or, in one case, the onset of depression. At these times they experienced feeling more restricted, more powerless. For them there was increased stress within the relationship, and there were more arguments at these times. The women also perceived more expectations on the part of their partners, more control as to what they could do and what they could not do. Certainly a more traditional and rigid task division resulted. Toni relates her experiences at some length:

> When I gave birth to (my daughter) and I wasn't earning, money became an issue with us. . .I didn't like to be in the position where I put my hand out and

> asked for money. I felt it was very unfair that he could just put his hand in his pocket and pull out a wad of notes and decide how much to dole out to me. . .if I needed anything, he would ask me, well, how much does it cost, and he would decide whether he thought I needed it or not. . .we value money differently. . .being surrounded by beautiful things was important to me but not to him. . .it was a constant battle. . .And I think that was one of the main reasons I went back to work earlier than I would have normally. . .

Fighting about money was an unpleasant but very real aspect of Toni's experience of economic dependence upon her partner. Increased feelings of pressure and anger and a more isolated and restrained way of dealing with them formed a part of Helen's experience of being without money. She seems to relinquish the right to a public expression of discontent. She describes that time:

> It seemed as if there were more pressures, and my way of dealing with the pressures--I wanted to deal with it alone generally. . .now, when I'm upset or angry, I'll blow up and it's finished. . .I remember those times when I was not working and didn't have my own money. I really believe that money is power and as long as I'm contributing I have certain rights. Not that raising kids was not contributing. You know the old business. Feeling things like, men have the control. My mother was right. And there's no way I'm gonna let anybody control me. Feeling angry a lot. Frustrated. But feeling I had to deal with that on my own, alone and silently, somehow.

F. Sexuality

With the exception of one woman, Maria, all participants in this study were currently monogamous and had generally been so through the course of their relationships. Maria shares a home, children, and a history with her husband and has had an intimate relationship of one year with another man. A second woman, Jean, has had a couple of relatively brief affairs with other men. The topic of sexuality was introduced spontaneously into the conversation by all participants. While individual experiences differed dramatically amongst these women, they came together in three clear, connecting themes; the power of sexuality, the impact of feminism, and the freedom to say yes or

no.

The Power of Sexuality

All women spoke of the intensity and power of sexuality in their lives and within their partnerships. It was in this arena that they experienced great joy and/or great despair. They experienced their shared sexuality as having the power to connect them deeply with, or separate them completely from their partners. It was a realm within which they might feel very scared and very vulnerable or very strong and very powerful. Whether the sexual aspect of the relationship was very good or very bad, in all cases it carried great impact.

For five of the women in this study, a shared sexuality with their partners was currently a joyful experience. It holds the possibility of great pleasure; it represents the sharing within which they feel closest to their partners; it gives great joy and allows for the transcendence of the 'I,' a creation of the 'we.' It moves beyond a mere physical sharing to a touching on many different levels. These are Jan's words:

> Our sexuality is quite wonderful. We love touching each other and it's a time we can feel completely in rhythm, in a deep way. It's a profound sharing that brings us so close, boundaries disappear. That is wonderful and at times scary.

Maria, in speaking of the intimate relationship she maintains outside her marriage, gives voice to her experience of the power of sexuality in her life.

> I spent a lot of time loathing men's physicalness, loathing penises. Allowing you to penetrate me is a privilege. It was a nice revelation for me to find out that I could really dig a man, to feel happy and safe with his physicalness. I have a glorious sex life now, as glorious as it was once terrible. . .you hear about things, like meeting your twin, your soul mate--with this man it has felt like that. There's a melting that is tremendously powerful. Somehow our bodies dissolve and our souls connect.

Sexuality was powerful for these women both in its glory and in its terribleness. For two of the women, sexuality within the context of their marriages veered more towards the terrible than the glorious. Maria talks of the terribleness of boredom, the vast depth of just being disinterested. It is apparent through her words, that her boredom

hangs as a backdrop in her marriage, forming and being formed by all the other interactions. Jean speaks of the sadness her shared sexuality brings; the experience of being repulsed by her partner's penis, of feeling smothered through intercourse, of despairing of ever being able to change her reactions. These are Maria's words:

> I know it has to do with the rest of the relationship, but the sexual part generally bores me to death. . .I have my room. He has his room. We're sexual once in a blue moon. . .sometimes I get lonely and initiate, he waits for me to initiate, but I feel like I'm taking and not really giving very much. And that bothers me. Because what I feel I'm taking is sexual relief at the moment because he can provide it. But there's no great joy in it. And I'm not responsive at all to what he needs. . .the problem is, the guy really adores me, you see. So for him, there's great pleasure in just being there, I guess. For me, there's primarily boredom. It's like a thick fog, sometimes it makes it difficult to breathe properly.

Jean describes her experience in this way:

> We rarely have sex. . .his penis seems something foreign to me, like I don't even want to touch it. . .I ostensibly love him and he loves me and we have a good relationship, but the sex. . .there's a sort of claustrophobia that is connected with sex for me now. Like, I feel smothered. . .I try really hard, probably harder than I should. . .it's a reasonable experience physically because I can orgasm. But as Germaine Greer says, the cat can make you orgasm.. .I'm left with such a sadness, I always feel like crying.

Sexuality was important or powerful in other ways also. Many women spoke about their sexuality / sensuality as having given them an appreciation and enjoyment of their bodies, as having brought a new comfort in and delight with their female physicalness. Sharing sexually facilitated a connection, for them, with their essential womanness. Being accepted sexually, being free to express themselves sexually brought a sense of being "O.K.," a sense of self liking and self confidence. Helen says:

> It was an important component of our marriage. It was important to me, I think, because I felt accepted as I was and appreciated as a sexual being. . .

Manon had this to say:

> He really loves my body, and that's helped me. I've started to enjoy my body, not just sexually, but in other ways too. Like I've lost weight. I've got into running. And I feel a lot differently about myself. . .more attractive. . .you know, I know I stand differently to how I used to. . .I don't know, they're all connected somehow. But I know that enjoying being sexual with him, seeing him really love my body, has resulted in me being comfortable with my body.

The unpredictability of sexuality, in its many moods, was an important component of this theme. Part of the power of sexuality seemed to lie in its relationship to control for these women. The negative side of this entails feeling the inability to control the tone of a sexual encounter, an acknowledgement that it may quite suddenly switch from the pleasant to the terrible, for no apparent reason. Maria expresses it in this way:

> Sexuality is very potent for me and within me there is always the prospect that it will become terrorizing. What I like to do with it is give it as much respect as I can.

The positive side of this movement, however, is that of the variety, the breadth and depth possible in this way of being with another. It allows the many moods of sexuality, and many of these are pleasant. Helen speaks of her experience in this way:

> Sometimes it's troublesome, a nuisance. Sometimes it's comfortable and enjoyable. Sometimes it switches in the middle. I can just never know for sure, how it'll be.

Jan had this to say:

> We're sexual in many different ways, sometimes it's soft and sensuous; sometimes it's passionate and intense; sometimes it's funny, playful, and silly.

Impact of Feminism

For all[7] women it appeared that a feminist value system had had some impact upon their sexuality, although the form of that impact was a very individual experience. For

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[7] I include Helen here. While she tended to think of herself as "different" as opposed to "feminist" prior to our conversation she had clearly held a feminist value system for many years, a value system that was obviously intrinsic to her experiencing in the world. I also include her further on within the topic, Children, theme, Impact of Feminism. Helen's "different" value system might easily be called a "feminist" value system. Thus, her "different" value system impacted aspects of her being-in-the-world, much the same way the other women's "feminist" value system defined their experiences.

some women it brought a feeling of "O.K.ness"; for others it created the feeling of not being "O.K." For some it brought peace and a validation of their experience; for others it brought conflict and a questioning of their experience. For some it generated more choice; for others it appeared to restrict choice. An ideology in interaction with different individual histories is bound to precipitate very different responses.

Three of the conversationalists said that it was with feminism that they began to value their bodies and their sexuality. Feminism made it "O.K." to be sexual or not. It gave these women the freedom to begin to feel and express their sexuality in their own way. It gave form too, and clarified some of the confusing messages they had grown up with. Feminism gave them a way to think about and give meaning to their sexual experiences. Two of the four women who gave voice to this particular aspect of the impact of feminism, were incest survivors; the other was one of the older participants who grew up with the sexual mores of the forties. Toni's words provide an example of this particular expression of this theme:

> I grew up with two conflicting messages. A notion that women weren't really supposed to need it or want it or enjoy it that much. And yet I also knew that you musn't lie there like a lump of meat. . .feminism has made me feel confident, that I had the right to say no. Whereas, before, I would say no and feel I had no right to say no, that there was something wrong with me. . .and it's got rid of a lot of hangups; how it's o.k. to enjoy my body, to be sexual.

For two women who were working closely with the victims / survivors of sexual assault, feminism resulted in a lot of anger towards men and their sexuality. With increasing anger, Maria and Jean closed towards men, and began to have difficulty being sexual with their male partners. Jean relates her experience:

> I was working at the Sexual Assault Centre and immersed in a world of rape and incest. It was like I absorbed this image of men as violent. . .penises were brutal and disgusting. . .I came to a point where I could barely stand to be touched by Mike. I didn't want to have anything to do with his body, his sexuality. I felt physically sick.

Feminism also impacted these women's considerations of sexuality in other ways. Each of these women had felt the impact of lesbian feminism in their lives. At different

times most of the participants had questioned their choice to be heterosexual, wondered both about the "political correctness" and the actual feasibility of living their lives with a man; thought and mused about the possibility of being with a woman. In this way, the visibility of lesbian feminism sparked a questioning, and at times confusion, about personal sexual experiences and choices. Manon speaks of her feelings:

> Since becoming a feminist, women friends have gained importance in my life. . .there is some conflict, sometimes, about being with a man. . .and I do see it as an option, that I could be with a woman. . .but right now I'm with a man, and I love him and I'm attracted to him. . .part of the conflict is not knowing whether I've made a really conscious choice, or whether I've just decided to be with a man because it's the easiest way to go. I don't know. Sometimes I go round in circles about it.

Helen had this to say:

> With feminism, lesbianism came into view for me. I have on occasion wondered, because I feel different, somehow, had I not met Brian, would I have become a lesbian. I don't know. I might have. . .recently, in a workshop there was a lesbian who really reached out to me, and I was frightened out of my skin because I felt I could like her.

Finally, there was a common articulation amongst these women that the possibility of a fulfilling sexual/emotional relationship with a man, within the reality of today's world was certainly not something to be taken for granted. In fact, many of them expressed some surprise that they were managing to live happily within a heterosexual relationship, that a man they were physically attracted to, loved them and accepted them as they were. There was a feeling that heterosexual feminists often had to separate where they had their sexual and emotional needs met. Jan expresses it this way:

> For the last six years I was living a split life. I had my sexual needs met by various men and counted on women to fulfill my emotional and intellectual needs. I knew at some point that I would want a long term relationship, but he surprised me; he came a decade early. I had come to the conclusion that it would be at least ten years before there would be men around that I felt I could spend much time with. . .

Freedom to say "yes" or "no"

All women stressed the freedom within their relationships to partake in or refuse a sexual experience. While two of the participants rarely chose to be sexual with their partners, there was "no environment of demand," no pressure to be sexual when they did not feel sexual; no pressure to engage in sexual activities that they did not feel comfortable with. These women felt free to be sexual or not, to define the terms of their sexualilty. This created a safety within their sexual interactions, the room to explore, control, and let go into the dimensions of their sexuality. Rachel speaks of her experience in this way:

> There's no environment of demand. Nothing is demanded of me that I feel uncomfortable with. I'm always free to be sexual or not. If I'm feeling pressured by school or whatever, and say, absolutely not, that's fine. My interest in sex has taken a real beating since being at school, but he's supportive. There's no pressure.

Manon expressed similar sentiments:

> We're sexual when we both feel like it. It's been good because whenever, even if we were in the middle of it and I decided that I didn't want to finish, we would just end. And that's always been O.K. So it's very comfortable, very safe, and that allows me to explore what is O.K. for me and what is not O.K.

Even when sexuality is a difficult and dreaded aspect of the relationship there is no atmosphere of coercion. There is a basic agreement between the partners that allows the woman to say "no" and therefore, to continue to feel in control of that aspect of her life. For example, Maria's husband, Peter, accepts that she does not currently feel sexual towards him, and does not pressure her for any change in this respect. Similarly, Jean relates that while Mike is hardly accepting of her sexual reticence, he certainly allows her her space to define what she wants. She says:

> He's hurt and confused by the fact that I don't want to have sex with him and he tries talking about it, suggesting things. . . .He's not accepting of the situation, but he is accepting insofar as he won't ask me to do anything I don't want to. He gives me the room to try and sort it out for myself.

G. Relationships with Women

For each of the participants, relationships with other women were very important. These are women immersed in the world of women, women who could not imagine not relating to other women. They are women who feel strongly connected with and committed to, other women; who feel they understand and are understood by their female friends; who enjoy watching and touching their women friends. Their experiences of being in relationship with other women are contained in four dominant themes. The first three--soul sisterhood, sensuality, and changing relationships--comprise unanimously expressed articulations, while the fourth theme--women as mentors--was particular to the two older participants.

Soul Sisterhood

All participants felt close to, supported by, and aligned with other women, both through personal friendships and political work. Contact with women was an integral part of their lives. These were women surrounded by other women. These were women loving and enjoying other women. They were women who felt a soul sisterhood connection with other women, who found with other women a similarity in perception, an extension of their being-in-the-world, a special sense of fun and language. These were women committed to working with and for women.

Each of the conversationalists articulated a sense of a deep connection with other women, a tie that was seen to extend clearly through time, solid through the coming and going of other relationships. This was a connection that was not uncommonly expressed as transcendent or spiritual, a meeting of souls. These are Rachel's words:

> There's some sense to me of a spiritual connection that I cannot define. . .a soul sister chemistry. . .a deep knowing.

Maria spoke of her connection with women in this way:

> Women are an extension of my being. I get so much pleasure from women. And so much pain. . .The women friends I have, it feels like it doesn't matter what happens to men, they'll be there forever and we'll all get old together and even if nobody has a man again, we can still have tea and read tarot cards and take trips and laugh.

A sense of sameness, an appreciation of a shared way of being, a knowledge that we are located similarly in the world despite our apparent differences, was unanimously articulated by each of these women, and hangs as the spoken and unspoken backdrop to this theme. Women saw and heard themselves in the movement and the words of other women. A connection with other women served to root these conversationalists solidly in the world, ground them, affirm their thoughts and feelings, provide them with a sense of sanity, the knowledge that they were "O.K." Jean put it this way:

> Women are my grounding; I cannot imagine not relating to women. I feel I always have a sense of their experiences, and they of mine.

Helen says:

> Most things I can share with my husband. But I get a male perspective there. And there are some things I want to bounce off another woman. . ..probably it's easiest with X because we're so similar. I can almost anticipate her responses. So maybe it's not bouncing off ideas, but rather looking for confirmation, her views.

Manon had this to say:

> I cannot imagine not relating to women. . . .They take up a large part because it seems to be what keeps me sane. There's a closeness with women that I don't get with Alain. We share similar perceptions of things and sometimes I need that just to truly know that I'm O.K.

As an aspect of feeling connected and allied with women in general and female friends in particular, these participants spoke of being generally open and trusting with women. Many of the conversationalists acknowledged that they listened to women differently than they listened to men. These women tended to assume the possibility of consensus, of connection, and of friendship with other women. Jean comments:

> I listen to women in a different way, with more openness, than I listen to men. Even really different women. Like, I always have a sense that I can feel where they're coming from or what has brought them to this point.

A further component of this theme, yet again expressed by the majority of the conversationalists, was that of having fun with other women. These women connected with other women through play. There is an implied sense of safety in their relationships

that allows for being silly, being crazy. They shared a sense of fun that often arose from their particular situatedness in the world. Jean says:

> Women are fun. They have a sense of the absurd. . .I mean we have experienced such an absurd kind of living. . .sometimes it's playfulness, humour. . .sometimes it's just absurd survival craziness, maybe.

These women's affinity with women was also expressed within the context of work. All of these women had a strong commitment to working for and with women. In fact, five of the seven participants' full-time jobs were either exclusively or predominantly with women employees and clients. Jan expresses her feelings simply:

> Being with women, it just feels good. . . .I work with women and that's the way I want it to be. I will always work with women. . .

Sensuality

Although only one of the participants in this study had been sexual with women, all spoke of a bonding in their female friendships that can only be described as sensual, an appreciation of, an attraction for female energy, a friend's touch, womanness. The women tended to have close physical relationships with their female friends, although this was less evident for the two older participants. Helen and Toni voiced the same awareness and enjoyment of femaleness but it was something that occured more at a distance; it was an aspect of their noticing, rather than an aspect of their acting. The other participants, however, liked to hold their woman friends, wash their hair, massage their feet, smell them, watch them. There is a sensual celebration of being-woman, evident in their expressions. Jean gives voice to her appreciation of femaleness with these words:

> I love women's bodies. They're so beautiful, so interesting. I love hugging, the smells, the softness. . . .I like massaging with my friends, bathing with them, the touch of them washing my back, just holding hands, watching them. . .

Maria expresses her enjoyment of her women friends in this way:

> I've never been bisexual but at the same time I love being with women. I love their bodies. I love watching them, listening to them, seeing them. . .there's certainly a lot of touching in my female relationships. Sometimes it's just so fine to have a woman stroke your head. And there's a whole difference in the

> way that feels than the way it feels when a man strokes your head. . .I don't know. . .it's purely female energy, whatever that comes from. . .so beautiful and so full of celebration.

Changing Relationships

For four of the seven conversationalists it was evident that their relationships with women changed as their relationship with their partner changed. Typically, as they experienced a growing closeness, a deepening of consensus with their partners, the participants tended to rely less on their women friends to meet the bulk of their emotional needs. Toni and Helen speak of times over the course of their relationships, especially in the earlier years, when they relied heavily upon support from their women friends, when they felt they needed to speak to women, hear a woman's perspective, have contact with a group of people who saw the world similarly to them. They also speak of a growing harmony within their marriages, of currently being able to depend upon their partners to be there for them emotionally, and the resulting change in their relationships with women. Far from abandoning women, an increased emotional closeness with their husbands, has resulted in them working more for and with women. While they have fewer and less close personal friendships with women, they have both chosen employment that allows them contact with women's issues. Toni had this to say:

> It may be that we have reached a point in our relationship where I consider him a true friend. Until now, I needed women friends because of him not understanding a lot of my needs and having arguments. . .now individual friendships with women aren't as important to me, but women are important to me and work fulfills my need to be involved in women's issues and to have contact with women.

And Helen speaks of her experience in this way:

> It was different when I was at home with the children because I had more time. And the things we talked about were mostly things that were happening with our children. There were some things that happened with the kids that I really wanted to express and wanted feedback from other women as to how they were dealing with it. And there were periods when I was upset and just needed

somebody to listen. . .now my needs have changed. I think I'm closer to my husband, and definitely to the children. . .and now my contact with women at work is far more stimulating than most of the social connections I have.

For two of the other conversationalists, Jan and Rachel, entering a relationship with an emotionally available man has similarly altered their friendships with women. Again, women are no longer essential in the satisfaction of their emotional needs. Both Jan and Rachel describe their connection with their partners as akin to a "soul sisterhood"; they feel as close to these men as they do to any women. Moving into a close emotional relationship with a man has not curtailed their feminist involvement but it has had an impact upon their close friendships with women. Rachel speaks of being free to work and think more with her women friends, play with ideas, theoretical and practical possibilities for change. Jan talks of her relationships with women becoming less serious, lighter, more fun. She says:

> There's no way that you can be involved with a partner and not have things change within your friendships especially when you're with someone you wanna be with and stuff. . .I'm finding with David, he's closer than having a relationship with other women or anybody I've ever met. I can talk to him and he understands me. With men I was with before, my relationships with women were more important because there were things I couldn't get out of those relationships that I could get from other women. Now that's changed a bit in that there's less need. I mean, I still love women's company, but I don't need them so desperately. . .so I'm finding that my relationships with women are changing a bit in that they're lighter, more playful. . .

For the other papticipants, changing relationships with women was not a theme of importance. In fact, although never explicitly articulated, it is apparent through the implied, the unsaid of their expressions, that Jean, Manon, and Maria relied primarily upon close women friends to meet the bulk of their emotional needs. These women also tended to have more and closer women friends than the other four participants.

Women as Mentors

This was a theme shared and strongly expressed by the two older women in this study, and yet not mentioned by the younger participants. Both Helen and Toni felt themselves to be somewhat different from women their own age, and currently experienced less of a soul sisterhood tie to women than did the other conversationalists. They allied themselves with women in general, and certainly felt they shared significant experiences with women as a group. However, they felt very unlike women of their own age, culture, and background, the women they would see socially. Helen had one close friendship with a woman several years younger than she; Toni had no close friends at this time. Both of them sensed, however, that they functioned as a mentor for younger women. While this was satisfying in that it provided them with a sense of being respected and valued, they sometimes missed the reciprocal closeness of a "bosom buddy." Helen says:

> It's hard for me to completely cut myself off from what I had in the past. I moved in a very middle class Jewish environment. But I don't have much energy for that. I'm different, I have different interests. . .It's through work that I can meet the kind of women I have stimulating conversations with. . .yet, even there, except for X whom I can really share my experiences with, the time I spend with women, I'm mostly listening. With some women it's like I'm a mentor. I have a certain something that I bring that they wanna tap into. And that's O.K. It does something for me too.

And Toni relates:

> I have often spent time thinking, I wish I had a woman friend that I really love or needed, much like I used to have before. . . .I'd love to be able to pick up the phone and say, wanna go to a movie tonight? But the women I know, my age, they wouldn't move without their husbands. They'll only come if their husbands have an arrangement. So my friends and I are at different places. . .work allows me to be involved in women's issues and to be with women, but there, they're younger, and somehow hold me at a bit of a distance and a bit in awe--I feel my age difference and I feel they look up to me, so it's different. . .

H. Relationships with Men

In speaking about their relationships with men other than their partner, the women of this study articulated predominantly common experiences and perceptions. Typically they had few close friendships with other men, although they certainly did not rule out the possibility of fulfilling friendships with men. They also spoke of experiencing men as the other, in both positive and negative senses. Accordingly, three themes capture these women's experiences of relating with men--few friendships, the possibility for friendship and men as "other."

Few Friendships

Outside of their heterosexual partnership women tended to have few, and in a couple of cases, no other friendships with men. They spoke of "not getting along easily" with most men. There was a general sense of there being a paucity of men in the world with whom it would be possible to form a friendship, from their particular point of view. In terms of their perceptions of most men and the dominant male construction of the world, they just did not want most men as friends. Jean says:

> I'd say I have one male friend with whom I'm pretty close. And that means quite a lot to me because in a way I feel I miss out on the balance of having more male energy around, but the thing is, I mean, there's just not much positive male energy around. . .I just don't get along with most men. It's more important for me to exclude bad men from my life than to be around men.

Helen tells a similar story--no close male friendships.

> In my present job that I have, I don't have the same sorts of relationships that I had in my previous job. And that's where most of my friendships come. . .and age is an issue. I find some men wanting me to mother and I don't want to get into that. . .so, some male acquaintances. No real friends. And there aren't that many men out there I'd want as close friends.

Maria was the exception amongst the participants of this study. At the time of the conversation she was spending more time with male than female friends although this was a recent occurence and a little unusual for her. She explains:

> In the immediate vicinity I have more male friends than female friends. I was

> thinking about that and suddenly went, wow, how did that happen? A lot of my female friends have recently moved away. And I saw that almost every female friend I have is childless and career oriented. . .and the women I know here now are different. . .right now, I don't have a whole lot to say to women that are staying at home all day.

The participants experienced some very similar reactions from men. They commonly expressed feeling that men tended to be intimidated by them. Seeing men withdraw when they found out what they did or what they believed in, was not at all uncommon. Men did not know how to act or be around them. Consequently, these women felt that men often did their best to avoid them. They also felt that men rarely saw them in their humaness or their individuality. Rather, they were quickly labelled as "feminist" and subsequently dismissed and avoided. Jan had this to say:

> David says I stand very confident. I stand like I know what I'm doing and I just look good. I look strong. And he finds that attractive. I see other men intimidated by that. Often men have talked to me, and inevitably it comes up, what do you do. And I tell them what I do and they don't know what the hell to say after that. Now I know ten bucks to a donut that if I told them I was a secretary, the conversation would carry on.

Toni speaks about how men have been reacting to her, since she has been employed within the women's movement.

> Since I've been working at xxxxx men's attitudes have changed towards me. Men used to like me. Now they don't see me, they just know what I do and there's a definite drawing away and not knowing what to say to me, being very much on the defensive. . . .I don't know what's changed in my behaviour, but it's as if they can't escape from me quick enough. They don't like to be left alone with me in a room, to have to talk to me.

In speaking about having few male friends, these participants also commonly articulated an intolerance for what they call men's "sexual games." Being around men often meant having to deal with subtle "come-ons" and innuendos, sexist jokes, and sexual harassment. For many of the women it has become easier to stay out of the majority of men's way. Jan comments:

> I don't want to sound anti-male here but I don't like the games men play. . .there's so much weird sexuality, connotations, innuendos hanging in the air. . .I just don't wanna waste my energy with it all.

These women accept that they currently have few male friends and assume that that is going to be the situation for a while because of the current way of being of most men. Like Jean, above, many of the women miss not having much positive male energy around. However, having no, or few male friends is preferable to being around most men. Manon sums up these women's sentiments in this way:

> It doesn't feel especially strange to have no other male friends. I mean look at most men. Would you want them as your close friend? It's just the way the world is right now.

Possibility for Friendship

While the majority of these women had few male friends, they did not negate the possibility of fulfilling friendships with men. While most experienced this as theoretical and future, rather than present and actual, there was a sense expressed of the world being incomplete without men. There was a desire on the part of these women not to write men off completely. All women had experienced, at some point in their individual histories, a deep connection and trust with a male friend. So, although the experience was perceived as somewhat rare, it was certainly not viewed as impossible. These women did believe that it was possible to engage in equal, loving and mutually giving relationships with men--or at least, that it was potentially, if not currently, possible. For example, Rachel says:

> I think the potential for true, intense friendship with men is there. . .. .I have had some friendships with men that have been very fulfilling and really very intense. But, here's a difference, I do not automatically assume that possibility with men. In fact, I tend to assume the opposite and I really am surprised and excited when that potential seems to develop.

In the following quotation, Maria recalls her friendship with her brother, and expresses her sense of the world in which there is a definite place for men. A world without men would be a world destroyed. She says:

> I think about my brother and the kind of joking, sporting, teasing relationship

we had. And there's something about how brothers feel about their sisters and the kind of support they give you and the energy. . .I can't picture the world with anything missing. For me, that is a world destroyed. I absolutely refuse to see the world destroyed. . .and I know that not all men are the antithesis life taking, and not all women are life giving.

Men as "other"

Each of these women experience men as "other," as being situated differently in the world. The "other" of course, inherently contains an ambivalence. The ambivalence these women feel towards their partners, as "other," is located within their general ambivalence towards men as "other"--being drawn towards, and moving away from. Men are different. On the one hand this means, for these women, that they tend to approach men with some caution. They are not as initially open to them as they are to women. They watch, they wait, and they assess, deciding if there is room to trust and be open. These women are not as at ease with physical contact with men and they certainly do not automatically assume the potential for friendship. Thus, one side of the coin of difference, is caution. Rachel describes her feeling:

By and large men do not understand the experience of injustice the way women do. There are some men who try to understand, but in no case is there automatic identification for a man. And, of course, that is important. I'm much more hesitant, more tentative with men. There's not that automatic sense of allies, of common ground. To me, men are different, other. I won't hug a man as easily as I'll hug a woman. I'm just not as open.

On the other hand, "otherness" creates an attraction for, a fascination with, the male being-in-the-world. The other side of the coin of difference is curiosity-wanting to know, wanting to explore, wanting to be around. These women also express an enjoyment of maleness in general--male bodies, male energy, male being. Jean put it this way:

I guess it's part of feeling I'm heterosexual, I enjoy being with their bodies, their energy. I like to look at them. I like to touch them. They're different. I like the flirting. The flattery. The mutual admiration. . . .I like how simple the world seems for them, like, when they decide to do a task they just go ahead and do

> it. Women seem to agonize so much more. . .I like the way they kid each other, joke. . .the way they get to hang onto being young, and goofy, and silly. . .those sorts of things.

Maria speaks of the ambivalence experienced by each of these women in relation to men as "other" when she says:

> I believe everything has a twin face, and there is such twinness in my relationship with men. I love them, am drawn to them, hate them, resent them, am jealous of them, admire them, desire them, despise them. . .

I. Children

Four of the seven participants in this study had children, the age range being eight to thirty years. In speaking of their experience of mothering a variety of perceptions were apparent. Certainly these women were mothers within different decades and across different situations. Jan and Maria experienced divorce and single parenting within the context of being a mother. Toni and Helen raised their children along with their husbands in a middle class setting. Despite such variety in individual history, three commonly shared themes emerged from the discussion of this topic--the impact of feminism, unlike other mothers, un-alike other children. A fourth theme--children as anchors--is discussed as an idiosyncratic aspect of one participant's experience.

Impact of Feminism

For each of these women, a feminist value system touched their experience as mothers. As with the topic of sexuality, the particular impact of feminism was quite individual. For some women it brought more joy to the experience; for others, it brought more anguish. For some it brought a new set of expectations; for others it validated already formed values.

The experience of giving birth is intrinsically female. When feminism impacted positively upon the experience of mothering, it often had to do with a woman's enriched appreciation of her womanhood. Feminism empowered some of these women such that they took new delight in their capacity to conceive and give birth, the sheer power and wonder of their body. Maria speaks of her experience:

> I first remember reading an excerpt from Kate Millet's book, in an article, and it was like a revelation. . .I felt so empowered and began to feel so good about being able to give birth, to be a mother, to be a woman; I began to see the strength of women in my own being pregnant and giving birth. . .the power and wonder of being life-giving.

Being a member of the work force while at the same time being a mother, is a combination of roles that has gained increasing acceptance as a result of feminism. Valuing oneself, one's being-in-the-world and one's own goals, nurturing oneself while at the same time nurturing one's children, is in practice a difficult combination and at times cause for considerable anguish. Each of these participants worked at the same time as being mothers. While a feminist analysis gives legitimacy to their choice, it doesn't remove the daily anguish. Maria speaks of her feelings:

> There are moments of fear when I think am I away too much? Could something happen while I'm gone? Could they be getting involved with unsavoury kids and suddenly one day I'm going to get this horrible big surprise.

For these women, holding a feminist value system meant attempting to eliminate sexism within their own childrearing practices. For the two women who had both sons and daughters, there was a desire to treat them equally, an attempt to provide similar values and expectations, and some anguish when the participants realized they were, in fact, treating their male and female children somewhat differently. Helen recalls:

> It was important for me to try and treat both my son and daughter in the same way, but I found I didn't do it. Did more for (my son) as he grew older, than I did for my daughter. I wanted her to learn how to cook and iron and I didn't really expect (my son) to do it. And it hit me that I wasn't insisting that he do it. . .and then I went through a very painful examination of how I'd treated them, and saw a lot of differences.

Similarly, being feminist and a mother seemed to create the desire for particular qualities in both sons and daughters. These women speak of attempting to teach their sons a gentleness, a healthy spirituality and emotionality, a positive attitude towards women, while they speak of wanting their daughters to know an inner strength, independence and lack of fear in the world, the value of female friendships. Jan speaks of her daughter:

> So she was saying somebody said something really rude to her and I said, well, what did you do, and she said, well I turned around and let him have it. And I said, O.K., great, there are many young girls who would have giggled at that. Yet you chose to take action. . .I've always tried to emphasize, if you've got something to say, say it, basically advocate, confront whomever you want, be it your teacher or whomever, so long as you do it maturely.

In speaking of what she wishes for her boys, Maria says:

> For my sons, I hope they're happy with who they are and I hope life's tragedies don't break them. . .I've really tried to ensure that they will treat women well, that they have a respect and gentleness for all aspects of the world they're living in. . .I think it's important that they know it's O.K. to cry, it's O.K. to express their feelings. . .I think it's important that they have a gentle sense of spirituality. . . .Remember when that little boy was washed down the sewer, [my son] had nightmares for months. . .so I talked about our ability to leave our body really fast. And within native spirituality, the grandmothers and grandfathers are always around. They're like people that aren't in body anymore. But they're there to assist you once you leave. . .and everybody gets back together again sooner or later. . .and [my son] has a really strong sense of this and is comforted by this.

Because being a feminist entails a unique construction of reality, these women articulated the impact of feminism on mothering, as all pervasive. Being a feminist means holding a value system that impacts every aspect of one's being-in-the-world. Thus, these women tended to frame the everyday experiences of their growing children within a feminist framework, be it a discussion of the news, having to do a household chore, or resolving a sibling argument. Jan elaborates:

> In our discussions, I'm certainly going to come from a feminist perspective. . .for example, if she gets talking about some of the things these boys do in school, and they're really disturbing. . .I've tried to instill a feminist value system. Like getting pleasure from activities that don't have to do with boys. Sort of valuing female friendships. Standing up for herself with these boys and telling them what she thinks.

And Maria says:

> If someone comes in with the Sun and there's a Sunshine girl of the week, then they hear what Mom thinks of it.

Unlike Other Mothers

It was part of the experience of each of these women, to have their children aware that they were different, that they were "not like other mommies." On the whole, this was a very mixed experience. At times, the children enjoyed, and were proud of those differences; at other times they longed for a mother who was just like all other mothers. Sometimes children spent much of their childhood wishing their mother could be different so that she could be the same, fit in, and only with adulthood, did they begin to appreciate their mother just as she was. In some instances children were excited by particular aspects of their mother's difference, only to be confused by other expressions of her difference. The mothers, of course, felt their children's reactions to their being-in-the-world. Sometimes that was fun; other times it was painful. Helen recalls:

> My son used to cringe at times because his mother was not like other mothers. And even to this day he shakes his head. At times that was really rough. . .he's very conservative. . .but now, in his own way he can say, thank goodness that I had the kind of mother I did.

Maria had this to say:

> My kids have always thought and said this aloud to me, "You know, you're not like other mommies." And I guess they mean other mommies in the suburban area that we live in. For example, when I was working at the crisis centre, they were living in a house where the phone could ring at 4:00 in the morning. . .their friends saw that as quite glamorous and exciting. . .other times the statement has to do with mommy and daddy not sharing the same room anymore; I mean, status quo, mommies and daddies do that, don't they? And also the fact that I'm away a lot. . .then it's hard, and I wonder. . .

While the children perceived these women as different in their role of mother, the women themselves saw themselves as different from other mothers. This perception was most marked for the two older women who appear to have been more isolated in their

differences when their children were young. Not as many women were making the choices they were making at that time. The younger women were aware of their differences when compared to the majority of women, but they rarely perceived their difference as a difficulty. They knew many other women who were making choices similar to theirs. Toni and Helen, however, were deciding in the fifties to leave their infants and return to work, for example, within a context that provided little support for their decision. They were more apparent in their difference. Helen spoke of her experience in this way:

> I am different from a lot of women in communities in which I have lived. I worked when everyone else didn't. And I had some guilt about leaving my children. I had some guilt about not totally enjoying my children the way you're supposed to. The way a good woman does. . .we didn't need the money. And I knew enough to know the daycare programming was not good. But I needed it for me.

Un-alike other children

In this study, the participants expressed an appreciation for, and trust of their children, pleasure in the ways they are in the world, but a knowledge that they are different in some ways, and a fear that life may be difficult for them because of this. Typically their children were perceived as unlike other children because they embodied those very qualities the women considered important in their sons and daughters. Sons were seen as different--by family, friends, and teachers--because they were sensitive, gentle, and emotionally expressive. Daughters were seen as different because they were assertive and independent and they valued women. The conversationalists, their mothers, both delighted in, and feared for their difference. Maria speaks of her son:

> My last one is really having problems because he doesn't fit at all and there's a lot of pressure on him to conform. . .he's very sensitive, very artistic. . .and his teachers are telling me he has social problems, because he's around his older brothers and older children and doesn't have a lot to say to his peers.

Helen speaks of her daughter

> She's very outspoken. I've lost jobs for speaking my mind and I think she will

> too. . . .She will probably have difficulty in finding a partner. She's very assertive and independent. She wouldn't put up with most men. Yet I don't want her to be alone. I hope she finds someone who cares about her.

While these women were afraid that being different might cause confusion and conflict for their children, they certainly did not want their offspring to emulate the typically well socialized child. The other side to this theme was an articulation by the women of the pain they felt upon seeing, at certain stages in their children's development, their desire to fit more invisibly in the world, their choice to be like other children. The two components of this theme were both expressed by these women. On the one hand, they saw their children as significantly different from other chidren and this made them both proud and a little fearful. On the other hand, they saw their children choose, particularly upon entering school, and then again in adolescence, to discard some of their "feminist" values for more socially popular ways of being. At times it was painful for these women to watch their children decide to fit in. Maria says:

> There was a really distressing moment for me when they turned five and went into the school system and suddenly these outside forces were working on them, and with the first one it blew my mind to see how fast he changed, to see how fast sex role stereotyping came in. . .like his coming home and saying, I'm not wearing those rubber boots anymore, they're girls' boots. Or, I can't have my hair like this. Everybody's saying I look like a sissy. Or the macho thing, where suddenly they seem violent and competitive. . .

And Jan speaks of her teenage daughter:

> She's a smart kid and I trust her, but now she's going through adolescence where it seems all feminism is shot out the window. . .it's really disturbing to watch this happen. All she's concerned about is being attractive to someone of the opposite sex. . .when she turned 13, well, it was just weird. . .she's one of those kids who has to drop to the floor to zip her bluejeans up, she wants to blow all her money on clothes and stuff. . .and I've taught her to be outspoken, to confront, and now she's doing it with me. . .

Children as Anchors

This theme was idiosyncratic to one woman, Maria. However, the clarity with which it emerged, demanded that it be included as a significant focus. Maria lived within and came to leave, without many external resources, a violent marriage. Through the course of her separation and divorce, she speaks of experiencing her children as something of a lifeline, a focus around which to muster her strength, her hope, and her sanity. For a second woman, Jan, who also experienced a separation and divorce while being a mother, there was no expression of this theme. However, the circumstances under which these two women separated from their husbands were vastly different. Jan left a relationship in which she had the majority of the control, and she left with material and emotional resources. Maria, on the other hand, escaped a relationship in which she had little control, leaving within a context of few material and emotional resources. At that time Maria's children represented for her an important reason to keep going, to continue to strive for change in her life. She speaks of her experience:

> One of my big victories was surviving, getting out of my first marriage intact. And the children were something that really kept me going through it all. . .for a while they were ultimately important because they were the only thing in the world that. . .it was like something you steadied yourself on, I don't like to say hung onto, but. . .focussed towards to make things change, focussed for change.

J. Coming to Consensus: the dance

This section of the results presents couples' patterns of agreeing and disagreeing, the dance of conflict resolution, the manner in which couples typically attempt to reach consensus in the face of disagreement. In essence, it speaks to the dissolution and maintenance of individual boundaries, the merging of separateness into a shared togetherness or on the other hand, the reinforcement of distinction and difference.

In the coming together of two individuals in a relationship, and certainly in the meeting of two different ways of being in the world, attempts to create a realm of consensus unfold. At first, different strategies may be experimented with, but ultimately a dominant strategy or pattern, a mutually agreed upon or consensual strategy prevails

within the couples' quest for agreement. In being with these women's conversations, three distinct patterns of creating consensus were apparent. The first has been called the 60/40 rhythm and tends to entail a unidimensional movement of the man to the woman's position. The second has been called the 50/50 rhythm and represents multidimensional movement in the partnership, the creation together of consensus. The third pattern has been called the 40/60 rhythm and from the women's perspective, tends to mean the entrenchment of distinct, locked positions.

The 60/40 Rhythm

This pattern of interaction represented the dominant means of creating consensus for two women, Maria and Jean, and their respective partners. Put most simply, this is a pattern in which change is initiated and demanded by the women on the one hand, and agreed to or submitted to, by the men on the other hand. It is a pattern within which the women speak of themselves as having the majority of control in their relationships. For example, Jean says:

> I have 59% of the power and he gets the remainder. That makes me feel safe. I think in terms of priorities for our life together or the plans we have for the future, I would set more of the tone and I will have the final say. I know he will do what I want, even if that's giving up his job and moving to another city or another country.

An aspect of this pattern is that change is typically requested by the woman. Most often the man simply agrees to the change. However, if the change is perceived as threatening by the man and there is a reluctance to let go of an attachment that his partner perceives as hindering the desired change, then he is likely to speak about that, present his point of view, and resist the request for change. The woman will then articulate her position and begin to verbally persuade the man to her point of view. Sometimes that is done calmly; sometimes it involves threats, considerable emotional intensity and expressiveness. For example, Jean speaks about her experience:

> Yes, we have disagreements. I'm a very disagreeable person. The disagreements are usually of my instigation. Usually I only disagree about things that I have more information on or that I feel more strongly about them than he

does. And he usually comes around to my way of thinking with a little bit of shouting, or explanation, or whatever it takes.

She goes on to give a specific example with relation to pornography.

> For example, with pornography I would insist that men have to confront their friends who read pornography even if they themselves do not read it, and that was initially hard for him to accept. Now, what happened? I explained and argued. He got some support through his involvement in a men's group. . .I mean, it's not as neat and tidy as that because it would sometimes get quite ugly. I'm not always rational in presenting my arguments. Sometimes I'd yell and scream, threaten him, hit him, have a tantrum. . .he'd be very quiet. . .he'd think about it and then do what I asked.

Maria provides a second example. She speaks about the turning point in her marriage, the point at which she initiated the change from living as a fairly traditional wife to beginning to live her own life, and how the process towards creating consensus unfolded for her and her partner. Again, we see an initiation of change by the woman, and a resolution of conflict which entails acceptance, by the man, of his partner's position.

> I think the major demand I initiated was when I saw myself no longer. . .I hated the whole idea of property ownership of women and there was a total rebellion in me that I didn't want to be considered a wife, a married woman. . .it was scary because I knew it was going to shatter a few fantasies for him. . .part of what he understood as a feminist was a woman who wasn't very interested in other men because they were all jerks. . .I demanded a symbolic divorce and said I was getting a tubal ligation, although he had had a vasectomy. . .he wept, he withdrew, he was tortured. . .I was beginning my career in writing and research and was on the road a lot. I saw the changes as symbolic of passage. He saw it only as my being sexual with other men. . .I was furious. It was one of our bitterest arguments. I yelled at him long and hard and I didn't know what he would do. . .he mourned, he went through a bereavement and all of a sudden he said, yes, you're right. . .and right now it's very hard for him because I'm away a lot, but he accepts it and he accepts being a single parent to two children that are not his by birth.

If there was any ongoing disagreement in these relationships, it tended to be around a rare change requested by the male partner. When the woman did not comply, he would periodically raise the issue for discussion. Within this pattern, when the possibility for change was introduced by the male partner, verbal interchange was rarely responsible for the creation of consensus. A discussion of the issue, in fact, appeared to entrench the lines of disagreement. When resolution did come about it was experienced by the woman as a somewhat mysterious occurrence. Jean relates:

> Sometimes Mike would get really upset with my arguing style or how I talked to people. He tried to show me that I was really dogmatic and aggressive. In a way it was more my tone than my content. And he would bring it up and talk about it and try to get me to see it. . .and for a long time I would just hold onto the fact that that was the way I did it. And it worked and it was comfortable. . .then one day I woke up and suddenly understood what he was getting at. I mean, I wasn't all of a sudden able to do it differently, but I saw what he was saying. . .in a way it's not clear how that happened, but in a way it is. I think I'd been given that information over a long period of time, plus I think my confidence level was built up to a point which would allow me to let people have some space in an argument.

For both Maria and Jean, their relationships initially provided them with safety and security, a sense of solidness that allowed them to begin to develop their own self confidence. Both of them articulated a sense of having changed considerably within the context of this relationship, but seeing few changes on the part of their partners. Currently they both felt that they were responsible for bringing most of the stimulation and energy into the partnership, that the men were learning from them. Maria, in particular, was bored and questioned whether or not she was learning anything. She says:

> Initially my needs were being fulfilled within this relationship. . .I was attracted to Peter for his solidness after my other crazy marriage. . .but when I suddenly started to grow and change, and want more for my life, well. . .he sees me as very strong, sometimes he even calls me the teacher so he says, well, I've learned this and this and then I think, but am I learning anything. . .and for a while it felt like that between us, pupil and teacher. I was bringing the

> information home, I was brow beating, I was demanding change and then one day I thought, I'm sick of being responsible for your evolution. I'm not doing that anymore. You wanna change, go ahead, but I'm doing what I have to do now.

Both women spoke of their partners "adoring" them. Explicitly they felt their partners would do anything for them. They saw the men as looking up to them, placing them on a pedestal. As a result Maria felt bored and unchallenged in her relationship. This was also true for Jean, but to a lesser extent. Jean claims that she learned little from Mike through verbal exchange, but that she did, at times, learn from watching him. She says:

> I don't learn anything from him, he can't convince me of anything on a theoretical level. How I learn from him is almost the opposite, where I would learn from watching him. What I've learned from him is just the different ways he deals with life day to day. You know, how he deals with my father, how he copes with everyday mishaps, like getting locked out of the house; just how he's calm and practical where I would panic and have a tantrum.

These are relationships in which consensus comes about usually because of the movement of the man to the woman's position. The woman's position tends to be inflexible. It is rare for her to move. They are relationships in which the men appear to be infinitely malleable and acquiescent in order to maintain the partnership. They are relationships in which an agreement to disagree is not an option. It is important for the woman, that her partner agree totally with her. She rarely compromises and alters her position. He frequently compromises and gives up his position. Also, they are relationships within which the women derived little sexual pleasure from shared intimacy with their partners. In talking of her experience, Jean has this to say:

> I think the one resentment or sadness would be in the area of sexuality for us because I'm not interested in sex with him. I have some really bad feelings about being sexual with him right now and I think I've always had a fair amount of reserve about it. And that is pretty sad because I think it would certainly add to our relationship, and I have some resentment about leading a pretty asexual life.

The lack of sexual satisfaction within their relationships has led to different solutions for these women. Maria continues to live with her partner, to share their history, the house, and the children. However, her work frequently takes her out of town and she has been involved for a year in a relationship, which she describes as sexually and emotionally fulfilling, with another man. Jean, on the other hand, chose a more or less asexual solution, until some months after this conversation, when she and her husband separated.

In looking at Helen's conversation, the pattern presented here appears to have been the dominant way of creating consensus for her and her partner in the earlier years of their marriage. Helen comments:

> What I do now is let him know that I'm unhappy, period. In the past, I've used threats and some of them worked. . . .For example, I knew Brian (had this illness) before we were married. And I thought about that very seriously and when he became more (seriously ill) I said, if you look after yourself, I'll do everything to help. But if you're abusing yourself, you will go to a nursing home. I will not look after you. I am not going to destroy myself to keep you going because you haven't looked after yourself. . .that's what I mean by a threat. And he always listened.

Helen shows, however, that her and Brian's patterns have changed in more recent years, that she is no longer primarily responsible for introducing and ensuring change, but that, in fact, the two of them now come to decisions together, interacting in more of a mutually open and compromising manner.

The 50/50 Rhythm

In looking at how consensus was reached between these conversationalists and their partners, a second pattern was apparent. This dance contains greater flexibility than that presented above, such that either partner might initiate change. The process of coming to agreement entails a mutual validation of each other's position and experience; it presumes an openness on the part of both partners to what the other has to say, such that, in listening to the other, the other's experience is brought into contact with the listener's horizons, such as happens in the hermeneutic process. Thus, individual

boundaries are flexible. Motivation is towards consensus, so that the process is non-competitive in nature. Accordingly, resolution or solution generally does not mean the movement of one partner to the other partner's position; rather, both players move and there is a joint creation of a shared solution that transcends the two individual horizons. Here is an everyday example from the conversation with Rachel. She says:

> I'm more of a neat-nik. He is more scattered. Say, for example, neither of us have been home much for days and the house is a disaster and I get really upset about it. I'll say, quite honestly the moment has arrived, my threshold has been reached, we have to do some immediate house cleaning. Now, Ron may not be willing to clean right away. But he'll show that he understands that it bothers me, that the house is truly a mess and that we do need to clean. I'll agree that now is not the time and we'll make an agreement, kidding each other, often, about when we'll do it. I feel supported and I know the cleaning will get done, so it can be almost playful.

An aspect of this pattern is that coming to consensus is frequently playful. It does not necessarily entail a serious series of bargains and compromises. Rather, it moves within a context of openness and trust--the knowledge that one will be listened to and the belief that a solution will be reached without great difficulty.

Four women--Rachel, Jan, Toni, and Helen--appeared to be currently engaged within this pattern of conflict resolution. It is these women, also, who speak of their relationships with their partners more in terms of a soul sisterhood, a deep and very close connection. In this being-together there seems to be a very large area of shared consensus, an easy rhythm of shared values that provides a solidness and allows an openness of the one to the other when a disagreement does arise. Within this pattern, women feel they learn things of importance from their partners. They also enjoy their sexual sharing with their partners. Thus, there is a general openness to the other's experience of the world; there is a willingness to stay open across diverse dimensions of intimacy with the other; there is a general harmony that is reflected in easy conflict resolution. Jan says:

> We clicked right away. There's a familiarity, as if we've been together before. . .it helped that he understood my politics and my experience as a woman,

because of his being an aware black man. He's right there. He grasps it, so we really agree on those things that are most important to me.

Moving to consensus in the 50/50 rhythm involves a mutual transformation of individual horizons. It entails a shift in perspective, seeing things differently. It means compromise not so much in the sense of "I'll do it, but I'd rather not," but more in terms of "I'll do it, I see the sense in doing it; I accept it." While coming to agreement often means that these women shift their positions some, they never perceive themselves as having to relinquish values and beliefs that are basic to their integrity. It is an aspect of this pattern that there are fewer ongoing, unresolved arguments between couples. Furthermore, at times, coming to consensus may mean an agreement to disagree. Within this pattern, this is sometimes an acceptable solution. These women do not appear to experience a sense of loss of self or integrity either if they have to change their position somewhat in order to create consensus, or if they have to agree to disagree in order to come to consensus. Jan speaks of her experience:

> We had this todo about abortion, because he said he wasn't totally pro-abortion. You know he's not completely comfortable with the killing of a fetus and I was set on all the feminist, pro-life arguments. I worked myself up into a real snit because he wasn't agreeing. . .we were so out of sync so we slept separately and then were open to each other in the morning. . .we realized, I'm not going to sway you and you're not going to sway me and this will go on forever, so let's just drop it. . .and then we saw that we actually agreed in many ways but we were emphasizing different aspects. . .we're both open to the art of compromise. We're pretty 50/50 there. I mean I would not put my policies on the back burner to agree with him, but for the most part we're so compatible, there is little that causes arguments like that.

While Jan and Rachel appeared to create this pattern with their partners with their initial coming together in relationship, this does not seem to have been so with Helen and with Toni. We have seen that the predominant pattern in the early years of Helen's partnership was that of the 60/40 Rhythm. However, over time that pattern changed to one of mutual compromise. Why the change? Helen's conversation suggests a couple of reasons. Firstly, she appears to have stayed open to learning from Brian and she was

always ready to acknowledge his value, his contribution to their togetherness. She was not bored by him and continued to appreciate him. Secondly, Brian would at times assert himself and initiate change, such that Helen had to move to an acceptance of his position. She relates:

> Sometimes when he knew what my answer would be he would make decisions on his own. I remember I had severed ligaments in my knee and was on crutches and in a cast and I couldn't drive the car we had. It was a standard. He came home one night, and one of the kids said, whose car is that out front Dad? And he looked very strange and was quite pink. He said to me, I've bought you a present. Well, I was very angry because I knew we couldn't afford a second car, and I lectured and was so angry. . .and he didn't blow up, but he was firm. He said I knew what your decision would be, it's done, enjoy it.

Brian never moved into a position of total acquiescence in relation to Helen. Helen never moved into a position of total control in relation to Brian. Rather, their being together evolved away from her more threatening style of persuading consensus to a mutual movement of individual boundaries, in coming to agreement.

When Toni speaks of her experiences it is apparent that in the initial days of their togetherness, she and her partner lived a pattern that will be described in the next section, a pattern in which both partners are perceived to initiate change but the woman-initiated change is often resisted by the man. Yet, currently, Toni and her partner relate in ways that appear congruent with the pattern described in this section. Again, why the change? Toni attributes the change to Sam's succeeding in business, becoming more confident in himself and accordingly, more relaxed, and less dogmatic and argumentative in his interactions with others, including herself. She says:

> At first he was encouraging me and hitting back at me at the same time, like, yes, do your choreography and then, I need to get a mistress, my wife is always tired, she's three times a week at rehearsals. . .and there were many arguments and no resolution. . .the important change came when Sam started feeling good about himself. When he got his own business. When he was making money. . .he relaxed in his interactions with me and other people. He

> began to like people. He wasn't as resentful and jealous of my friends, my work. . .he didn't disagree, anymore, with everything anyone said.

Toni implies that Sam's general being-in-the-world moved from a saying "no," a motivation for debate, towards a saying "yes," a motivation for consensus and agreement. Accordingly, their patterns of coming to consensus changed to be predominantly that of mutual compromise. Toni provides a recent example, demonstrating reaching agreement as the mutual transformation of separate, individual horizons. She says:

> We were discussing last year about going to South Africa. My mother is not at all well and I had got word that she was deteriorating. Going there does not mean a holiday for us and we both needed a holiday. He decided he wouldn't come, that he wouldn't be able to help and it didn't make sense economically. I wanted him to come with me for company and to help with some decisions. He then said he'd come if we could get away and go to Capetown for a while for a holiday. . .we discussed it and I began to see that there was some sense to his reasoning, so we decided we would do that, but that we'd plan it when we got there and saw how things with my mother were.

The 40/60 Rhythm

In looking at participants' discussion of how they reached consensus with their partners, a third theme emerged. This theme captures the dance for Manon and Alain at the time of interview and for Toni and Sam in the initial years of their being together. Within this way of being together both partners may initiate requests for change. Typically, when the male initiates a request for change it is discussed and generally complied with. However, when the woman introduces the possibility of change, especially around feminist issues, it meets with resistance and counter arguments. A verbal argument will then ensue. Typically, it will flare up frequently or infrequently over many months. Whenever resolution, that is, consensus, does occur, it seemingly happens separate from the woman's input, with the man appearing to be totally responsible for his own change. Manon speaks:

> We had a long standing argument, almost from the time I first knew him, about pornography. I was learning more and more from other feminists and I spoke a

> lot about it and Alain just didn't agree. He could understand about pornography in terms of the more violent magazines, but he never agreed that Playboy and Penthouse with their pretty women, were pornographic. . .we argued about this on and off for three years with me bringing it up, introducing new ideas. . .the evening it was resolved, I was quite surprised. I came home to find Alain with a whole stack of pornography in front of him. I'm sure my mouth dropped to my boots. He'd got them from his brother's friends and he'd been looking through them and decided they were awful, but it was like he'd found his own reasons for the decision and they were certainly a bit different from some of the feminist arguments.

In many ways this pattern of interaction is very similar to that described in the first instance. However, the location of the women within the pattern is different--in fact, they stand at opposite ends of the dance--so here we see how the spectrum looks from the position of these women.

In this pattern, as in the first pattern described, an agreement to disagree is not a viable option in the creation of consensus. Coming to consensus entails the pull of one partner by the other, across to their perspective, rather than the creation together of a shared view. Thus, a verbal tug of war ensues. When change is initiated by the woman, she experiences the creation of competition rather than consensus. If a coming to consensus does occur, that is, if her partner, in fact, comes to agree with her, that change is perceived as being unexpected, usually unexplainable, certainly outside the influence of her arguments and the competitive process in which the two of them have engaged. Again, another example from Manon:

> One of our most long standing arguments was about doing the dishes--basically, he expected me to do the dishes because he was subsidizing my rent. . .I would always initiate the argument with different reasons about why I felt I shouldn't have to do the dishes. I brought it up a lot because I couldn't leave it until I felt it was really settled. . .it went on and on, and then, suddenly one day he was O.K., about doing the dishes, he was doing them. . .arguing didn't seem to work, and that is why I'm not sure what happened to change it and so I wonder sometimes how permanent the change

> is, although it's been a few months now. . .all I know is that it seemed to have something to do with his mother being here.

Within this pattern, women perceive their partners as debaters, as loving to argue, disagree, and verbally compete. They feel constantly the pull to relinquish their perspective and to adopt that of the men, to acquiesce in order to create harmony. Sometimes they will give in for the sake of peace, and then feel resentment and so reopen the issue. The arena within which the tug of war occurs, is the verbal arena. The opponents talk at each other (without too much listening); they attempt to persuade with words. In theory, the opponent with the strongest verbal arguments should win. In practice, no one wins. Both are losers (in the sense that the purported goal was consensus), because the lines of distinction are generally more heavily entrenched as a result of the match. Competition times are not always predictable for these women. Without a doubt they are scheduled to occur when the woman initiates change. However, sometimes they are also precipitated unpredictably from apparently harmless talk, the sharing of experiences or ideas, when the men decide they feel like a verbal bout. This is a pattern in which to argue is common. It is a pattern within which the women feel stubborn. Because consensus appears to entail the assumption that they always change their perspective, they hold tightly to their point of view. Athough the women generally choose to "fight" rather than to "give in" (the terms within which these interactions are conceptualized), they feel they have little control over when a disagreement arises and when it is resolved. Manon speaks of her experience in this way:

> In many ways Alain quite likes disagreements. He likes to have arguments. He finds them fulfilling, whereas I just find them devastating. I consider them an affront to my being, our relationship, whereas he just finds them stimulating.

And Toni had this to say:

> I really don't always know when he's going to take the role of the debator, but this is actually his way, a lot of times, of communicating. When someone speaks about something he will automatically take the counterpoint, because to him that's stimulating discussion.

However, in looking at this pattern, there does seem to be some predictability as to when the partner will be supportive and when he will be the debater. Typically, when the

women express some doubt, some hesitation about an idea or a decision, their partners are comforting and reassuring. On the other hand, when they are confident and assured about a particular position or decision, this tends to meet with questioning and criticism on the part of the men. Although this was apparent through Manon's descriptions of her experiences, she expressed little awareness of this pattern. Toni, however, in speaking of her past interactions with Sam, came to this realization. She relates:

> It's a really funny thing. When I feel I haven't done something O.K. and I say to him, oh gosh, I didn't handle this properly, then he's right into, don't be so hard on yourself, what else could you have done, you're doing an excellent job. But if I say to him, oh, I did a speech that was so good, I said this and that, then he seems to want to bring me down, you know, were you prepared, what was the audience like, why did you say that that way. . .

In the first pattern described in this section, women perceived themselves as having the majority of power in their relationships. In the second pattern women articulated their sense of an equal division of power between them and their partners. Within this third pattern the women experience relatively less power and less equality in their relationship. In many ways they feel they have little impact upon the men in their lives. Their partners will do as they please, regardless of them. The women acknowledge that they learn from their partners, but they are unable to see their partners learning from them. They doubt their contributions to the relationship. They certainly doubt that their partners would easily comply with their requests for change. This was true for Toni in the initial years of her marriage. It was true for Manon at the time of this conversation. She says:

> He will do exactly what he wants to do, he won't change his plans. They're fixed, and in some ways I feel secondary.

K. Being Feminist and Heterosexual

Each of the themes discussed thus far capture particular elements of the experience of being feminist and living with a man. The two commitments come together in each one of the themes illustrated in this chapter. However, in relation to the particular question, "What does it mean for you to be feminist and living with a man?" three

commonly expressed experiences emerged as important. Essentially, the participants experienced the combination of feminism and heterosexuality as difficult but not impossible; they spoke of believing that gender did not determine a particular set of positive or negative qualities and they told of feeling judged by some feminists because of their choice to be with a man.

It May Be Difficult, But It Need Not Be Impossible

For no woman in this study was there an automatic assumption that it is currently easy to be a feminist and to have a fulfilling heterosexual relationship. Even when their own relationship was harmonious, these women had a sense that the combination of feminism and heterosexuality was difficult for other women, and perhaps especially for those women in existing relationships, who were just now beginning to redefine their world. What was unsaid, but what hung within the gaps in these conversations, was an inference that their experience may be unusual, uncommon, the exception--because their relationships worked; the harmony outweighed the struggles. Yet because of their experience these women were unwilling to write men off completely; they did believe that feminism and heterosexuality could come together gently and lovingly. There was an inference that even if this currently occurred only in rare moments, those moments should become more common in the future. Nevertheless, despite the prevailing peace of their own relationships, the participants expressed a general expectation that the coming together of men and feminist women, with their differing world views, was bound to ignite some fireworks. Jan says:

> It's difficult. It's very difficult. I really feel sorry for those women who are now becoming aware and are already involved with men. They have an incredible struggle ahead of them. I have been fortunate in my relationship with David because he is so aware, but generally I think it's a very hard thing to be a feminist today and have a positive relationship with a man. We're living in a patriarchy where men are not willing to give up their power and if they're wanting all the power, then it's going to be screwy.

Jan is with a man whose world view she considers to be very similar to hers. On the other hand, Toni is with a man whom she perceives as experiencing the world quite differently

to her. Yet again, while she has a general sense of the difficulty inherent in being feminist and heterosexual, she indicates that her own experience has been predominantly harmonious. For her, being with a man, seeing him change and seeing the two of them together, creating a shared and loving world, provides Toni with a sense of hope, trust in a better future.

> I think in general it's hard. And sometimes it's hard for me. But it provides a healthy balance that I have a husband whom I can talk to and have good feelings about. I am heterosexual and I feel very fortunate to be in a relationship where I can be me, a feminist. It gives me hope that I can be in a relationship with a man and he gives up some of those sexist male things so there can be a togetherness. As long as he can continue to understand that no man can really know what it's like to be a woman and not put limits on my feminist activities, then it's not much of a struggle. . .yet there are certain things that I don't share with him, that I feel would be too extreme for him to accept.

While Toni sometimes remains silent about some of her more radical beliefs, in order to preserve the harmony in her relationship, Manon feels it is important to introduce Alain to the full extent of her feminist views. Either way there is some difficulty, but the difficulty is rarely sufficient to result in despair. Manon speaks of her experience, the coming together of two different world views, in this way:

> Sometimes it's difficult, but it's certainly possible. Part of what it means is that I can't protect him, that I can't not talk about things that concern me and there's been times when that has resulted in some devastating arguments. But even with all the arguments there are still the fun times. . .and they continue to outweigh the bad times.

In struggling for something believed in, in being vocal about one's world view, in taking risks within an important relationship and in just being different in terms of society as a whole, there is always some fear of ultimately ending up abandoned, alone. Maria speaks at length about some of the fear, that the struggle in combining feminism and heterosexuality, creates for her. In her way she echoes the sentiments of each of the conversationalists--being a feminist and heterosexual is a risk and it's scary sometimes, but choosing a traditional relationship would be akin to choosing an emotional death.

Choosing life may entail a struggle--but it is a struggle with rich rewards. She says:

> Sometimes I have this vision of getting old and being alone. But I know, as fast as I sit here, that if I was given the choice of a traditional relationship I'd say. . .oh God. . .I'd choose the aloneness. . .there's always the fear that people will reject what you need, who you are, what you're hearing. Sometimes it's painful and it's scary. The pain is the external judgements that come from orthodoxy. The pain is my own questions about going into a place where maybe no one's at the end. We don't know if anybody's gonna think because of what we've done, we're worth saving. And I think there's a whole history, I would call it a karmic and genetic paranoia within women, that if we get way out there, we're going to get lynched, we're going to get burned. . .at the same time I don't think you can open doors and step through them and step back again and I wouldn't want it any other way. I wouldn't wish myself back there for all the safety in the world. I have incredible faith that I've done this much and I'm still O.K. I'm not on valium. I haven't killed myself. I even have a good time a lot of the time.

Emotional caring is not gender based

These women did not feel that they were in relationships that compromised their feminism or their personal integrity in any way. They speak of experiencing an emotional caring, trust, and support with their male partners that stands in relief against the background of Men as a class of oppressors. They argue, from their experience, that men are capable of loving positively, and that the men they are with provide a love and support, as fine as any woman might offer. They conclude that emotional caring is not gender based. Jean speaks of her experience with these words:

> I don't think I'm living in a relationship that compromises my feminism or my integrity as a woman. For me, it's comfortable because fortunately or unfortunately, I'm not sexually attracted to women. And the only thing I can do is either have sex with men or not have sex at all. And you know, he's one of the most supportive and loving friends I have and it's just not sex linked. He just is. I probably couldn't find anyone, woman or man, to be as loyal and as

giving as he is to me.

In essence, these women suggest that at times one must move the filter from generalities and a class analysis to that of a focus on individual human lives and experiences--from the general to the particular; from the universal to the idiosyncratic. They suggest that any loving relationship is precious, and that one cannot predict, on the basis of gender, where you will find it and with whom you will share it. Similarly, a common political analysis does not guarantee a gentle friendship. When a loving relationship buds it deserves to be nurtured as a flowering possibility, and not automatically denied as a political weed, the offspring of a false consciousness. Rachel relates her experience in this way:

> I live with a man who is a genuinely good person. I think this relationship is rare and wonderful and I have not found this kind of a relationship with any other woman or any other man. In my experience there will be very few people in a lifetime with which there is such giving and such caring. There's just no guarantee on purely gender grounds that anyone will think or be a particular way. Sharing certain social and political concepts does not necessarily make for a good emotional relationship. To say all men are X and all women are Y is as prejudiced as any statement based on race: say, all blacks are stupid and all whites are intelligent. Sometimes you have to look at individuals and individual relationships.

Down The Feminist Totem Pole

Many of the women conversationalists in this study felt somewhat judged by sectors of the feminist community, sensing that they were perceived as less of a feminist because of their being in a relationship with a man. They speak of a sense in the radical feminist community that the "politically correct" choice is to be with a woman; that being with a man lends doubt to the sincerity of one's feminism. For some women there was conflict between what they perceived as "right" in feminist circles and what they felt to be "right" for them in their personal lives. This precipitated a thorough questioning of their choices, and in some instances, an almost "closet" heterosexuality. Manon says:

Sometimes there is conflict for me around being with Alain. Part of it is, that as

> a feminist, I should prefer to be with a woman, I think that's part of what many lesbian feminists believe, that women are the natural choice, really. . .I fear that I will be valued as less of a feminist, you know, relegated to a lower position because of the way I live. . .for a while that meant I kept him and my feminist friends very separate. I would go out with my friends and then come home to him. I was really worried that my friends would abandon me because they'd think I lived with an ass, a male ass.

For other women the reaction was more one of anger than doubt. In sensing a judgement from other feminists, that to be feminist and heterosexual was inherently contradictory, and possibly an abandonment of women, they felt that their personal experience was being denied, and in fact, silenced. They felt there was little room within feminist circles for an expression of the positive aspects of their intimate relationships. They were listened to when they were upset or angry about their male partners; they were not listened to when they were joyful and having fun. Rachel had this to say:

> I feel angry when I sense from feminists that no woman who is genuinely woman-identified can choose to live with a man, because that's contradictory. Presumably what makes a feminist a feminist is that she has observed society as it really is. So, why do I assume I have to buy this new set of untrue myths? I can think of women in very loving, also sensual / sexual ways. I live with a man who is a very gentle, loving person. I know women, who call themselves feminists, whom I think are not good caring models. It makes no sense to me to give up a gem of a relationship, a lot of warmth and caring, for something that is politically correct.

Some of the participants worked and played with feminist friends and acquaintances from whom they sensed these attitudes. Although they were sometimes upset, they had learned to live with feeling they might be "more correct." Other women felt they could never work harmoniously with feminists who considered them to have sold out because of their heterosexuality. As a result, these women carefully explored the feminist community and deliberately chose a niche where they felt they could work and contribute with a minimum of conflict. Jan relates her experience:

> There's a group of women, not too many, but I often get the feeling that they

think we're sold out through our heterosexuality. . .on the last Women's Day march, we were all advocating lesbian rights etc. and this woman behind me keeps yelling 2-4-6-8, lesbian is twice as good as straight and I thought, here we are struggling for the same things, don't tell me your lifestyle is better than mine. . .I have nothing to do with those women, I couldn't work with them, only because we'd never agree. . .I'm sorry I'm not lesbian. What can I say? Hopelessly heterosexual. . .so I've just found where I fit in and I'm comfortable with that.

V. Discussion

Chapter V opens with a drawing together of the themes presented in the previous chapter, a presentation of one composite picture of what it means to be feminist and in partnership with a man. The second section launches into a discussion of methodology, locating the creative process used in this exploration, within an historical context and a future possibility. The final section presents some reflection and speculation concerning the themes themselves. In many ways it represents a retelling of the stories told in Chapter IV, the nestling of a story amongst other stories that come to mind.

A. Being Feminist: Living with a Man

A general picture of the experience of being feminist and living with a man emerges from the themes presented in the previous chapter. A synthesis of the commonality inherent in those themes creates one story of what it means to combine the two commitments, a story that is brought to being in the interaction of seven story-tellers and a writer. In terms of this exploration, what it means to be a feminist and to share one's daily lived experience with a man, might be spoken about with these words.

For these women, being feminist and living with a man entails participation in a relationship that is experienced as nurturing and safe, supportive and solid. It means sharing a sense of trust, harmony, and togetherness with one's partner, a mutual attraction and liking for each other. Feeling valued, cared for and loved is an integral part of the experience. It involves sharing one's daily life with a man who understands, supports and participates in one's feminism, one's language, one's knowledge. Sharing particular interests, activities and values is an aspect of this being-in-the-world; so too is the ability to talk together, to dialogue, to listen to and understand one another. Consensus around spending time together and spending time separately is one step in the dance of this partnership. Living one's feminism in interaction with a man means experiencing a sense of freedom, a lack of restriction, feeling free to be in one's fullness, to express one's richness and expand one's being-in-the-world. It also means feeling challenged and stimulated. It means creating a context with another in which one learns valued skills and qualities. Thus, there is a somewhat conscious choosing of a partner who is likely to stimulate desired personal change.

Within the context of this exploration, being feminist and living with a man also entails living with ambivalence, living with the experience of being at one time drawn to and at another time repelled from some aspect of the other. Ambivalence towards maleness forms a crucial element of this situatedness in the world. Maleness draws, interests and attracts but also holds the possibility for disconnection, repulsion and separation. Difference kindles ambivalence. Similarly, particular personal qualities of one's partner are both loved and hated. Qualities that attract a woman, that differ from her personal ability or style and, therefore, comprise the potential for stimulating personal change, also present a twin face, the possibility of alienation, separation, lack of connection. Living in the world at the confluence of feminism and heterosexuality further means attempting to create a balance between challenge and support in one's partnership. It involves the experience of ambivalence when the one outweighs the other. It also entails living with ambivalence in relation to one's partner in yet another arena--that of raising children. Immersion in this world as a mother is likely to bring, on the one hand, respect and appreciation for one's partner's qualities as a father and, on the other hand, some criticism and the desire for different interactions on the part of the man.

Being feminist and living with a man for this study's participants, brings with it some areas of difficulty or nonconsensus, where one feels at odds with, separate from one's partner. Disconnection is likely to arise from the noncongruence of some values, be they aesthetic taste or the relative importance of the relationship. Agreement in relation to attitudes or behaviour is rarely completely consensual. Disagreement is also likely to occur in relation to the man's expression of emotion, most probably the lack of affective expression or the undesirable (from the woman's point of view) expression of anger. Furthermore, sexuality is likely to be an area of some discussion or discord at one time or another.

Combining feminism and domesticity with a man yields an equally shared but largely unstructured division of household chores for these conversationalists. On the whole it means consensus around task division, attending to chores when the mood dictates, and trusting that one's partner will participate equally. Being an active member of the workforce and moreover, financially independent, constitutes an integral aspect of living as a feminist in partnership with a man, in terms of this discourse. It entails having one's

own bank account, contributing to expenses equally or according to income and perceiving economic independence as basic to the successful combination of feminism and heterosexuality.

In a merging of feminism and heterosexuality, as explored within this dissertation, women see sexuality as intensely powerful in terms of connecting them with, or separating them from their partners. Feminism is likely to have impacted their sexuality in one way or another. Certainly it has probably initiated some questioning of one's choice to be heterosexual; similarly it has probably generated some doubt regarding the possibility of a fulfilling sexual and emotional relationship with a man. It most likely has had some impact upon one's experience of freedom within shared sexuality. Being feminist and sleeping with a man means paying attention to one's own body and desires. It involves feeling free to say both yes and no, to live the choice of partaking in or refusing a sexual encounter.

Being feminist, albeit living with a man, certainly means participation within the world of women for these participants. It means experiencing a soul sisterhood connection with other women, loving and enjoying other women as close personal friends and as political allies. It involves feeling identified with and supportive of women, sharing a sense of similar experience, of meeting in the world at a similar juncture, of understanding and being understood. Being politically active with one or more feminist organizations is an aspect of this lived experience. So too, is a sensual connection with other women, an appreciation of and attraction for womanness, the pleasure of watching and touching women friends. Relationships with women friends are likely to reflect changes within the heterosexual partnership, such that growing harmony with a partner means that one no longer need rely on women friends to meet the bulk of one's emotional needs, thereby freeing one for more political activity and/or more play.

Despite participating in an intimate relationship with a man, the women in this study have few or no other relationships with men. In fact, having few male friends is preferable to being around most men. Seeing men awkward and intimidated in mutual interactions is a common aspect of this experience. It involves accepting as fact that one will have few male friends for some time to come. Yet there is no desire to write men off completely. Rather, there is a belief in the potential for fulfilling relationships with men although this is

seen as somewhat more theoretical and future than actual and present. On the whole, men are perceived as "other," as being situated differently in the world. Accordingly, they tend to be approached with some caution.

Within the context of this exploration, when feminism and heterosexuality brings the added dimension of children, motherhood is spoken of as an experience strongly impacted by feminism, an experience which constitutes an attempt to eliminate sexism from one's interactions with one's children. It means framing the everyday experiences of growing children within a feminist framework. It also entails the desire for particular qualities in boys and girls--in boys, gentleness, a healthy emotionality and positive attitudes towards women, and in girls, independence, assertiveness, lack of fear, and a valuing of women. Typically, children perceive their mothers as being different from other mothers. Typically, also, mothers perceive their chidlren as being different from other children in their embodiment of many of the qualities the mother values. This creates a mixture of pride and fear regarding how the children might fit into the world. On the other hand, there is distress when children do choose to fit, when they choose more socially popular ways of being and discard some of their feminist values.

For these women, coming to consensus or resolving a difficulty within a feminist heterosexual relationship tends to comprise a particular pattern of interactions which occur within the lived experience of having equal power. Change might be initiated by either partner. There is an openness to that which the other has to say, a mutual validation of each others position and experience. Individual boundaries tend to be flexible and, with a motivation towards consensus as opposed to competition, there is a joint creation of a shared solution that transcends two individual horizons. Solutions vary and may entail agreeing to disagree. At no time does resolution necessitate the relinquishing of values or beliefs basic to one's integrity.

Despite the general harmony of these seven participants' personal relationships, the coming together of feminism and heterosexuality, the merging of two potentially very different world views is seen as material for potential conflict. There is no automatic assumption that it is currently easy or possible to be a feminist and have a fulfilling heterosexual relationship. Thus, there is some sense that one's personal experience may be uncommon, the exception. This experience brings with it the articulation that a

traditional relationship is just not a viable option as it would entail killing too much of one's personal richness. At the same time moving into an unchartered and untraditional journey involves some risk and some fear. Within this discourse, living one's feminism in interaction with a man means living a belief that emotional caring is not gender based, that men are capable of loving positively, and that one's relationship does not compromise one's feminism. At the same time it means occasionally feeling judged by some sectors of the feminist community, feeling somewhat less of a feminist because of one's heterosexuality.

B. Creating a Story (or about methodology)

A Century-Old Debate

In the painting of a portrait it is not possible to separate the final product either from the painter or the manner of painting. The question of the artist has been dealt with elsewhere in this text. It is the manner of painting that is at issue here. The size and type of canvas, whether oils, water colours, or charcoal was used, the nature and thickness of the brush, the colours chosen--there is no doubt that each of these factors, choices regarding the method of artistry, affect the emerging picture. Of course, what a painting is, is intimately linked to how the painting was painted. This is also true with research. In any endeavour such as this text there is an integral interaction between process and content, between methodology and results. Accordingly, the process, the manner of painting, the bringing to creation, needs comment.

The hermeneutical encounter is the process out of which this portrait of being feminist and living with a man has been created. If the portrait was painted in another way we would have been looking at a different picture. The hermeneutical conversation is a relatively unfamiliar methodology for psychology and the social sciences. Yet it stands within one side of a more familiar debate concerning the "proper" methodology for the social sciences. This section locates hermeneutics within that century-old debate.

In the nineteenth century psychology established its position as a separate discipline, thereby freeing itself from the bondage of philosophy. Several debates concerning subject matter and methodology surrounded its beginnings, one of the most

crucial being whether or not psychology ought to align itself with the "Naturwissen schaften" (natural sciences such as physics) or the "Geisteswissenschaften" (mental sciences such as history). In the flight from philosophy, the natural sciences with their promise of causal explanation, lawfulness, prediction and control won the day.

However, while Wilhelm Wundt, the acknowledged founder of experimental psychology, was successfully demonstrating that the mind might indeed be empirically investigated, other thinkers, such as Wilhelm Dilthey, were arguing that while it might be appropriate to explain nature, investigations concerning humanness must focus on meaning and aim at understanding (Verstehen). Only by founding the social sciences on understanding and interpretation would respect for humanness be possible. In the last decade, after 100 years of psychology as a natural science, this debate has re-emerged with new vigour. Dallmayr and McCarthy (1977) state it aptly:

> While man's empirical knowledge in our century has expanded at an exponential rate, however, his sense of purpose or direction seems to have atrophied; although more knowledgeable about the world than any of his forbears, man today is more ignorant or at a loss as to what he and his accumulated knowledge are *all about*. Confronted with a rationally functioning but ultimately silent universe, he asks the question: what is the point? Viewed in this context, contemporary methodological issues reveal their salience and underlying agony: The concern with understanding as a type of inquiry results from a crisis of human understanding (p. 1).

Over the last several years many writers (e.g., Apel, 1977; Dallmayr & McCarthy, 1977; Giorgi, 1970; Habermas, 1977) have developed a critique of the natural scientific approach to psychology and the social sciences, arguing for a methodological reorientation towards understanding and interpretation. While criticisms come from varied origins, there is considerable commonality in their essence. It seems appropriate within the context of this text to draw upon the feminist critique of traditional methodology in order to illustrate the typical objections to social science's base in logical empiricism. Inevitably, the feminist critique mixes commonally articulated criticisms with its idiosysncratic contributions. It is not uncommon, however, that arguments for an alternate methodology find their roots in political reflection.

Feminists (e.g., Benston, 1982; Daly, 1978; McCalla Vickers, 1982) unquestionably develop their critique of the research enterprise within a social and political context. Because feminism is about the reconstruction of human knowledge and human existence, and thereby questions the fundamental theories of being and knowing developed within patriarchy, and because knowledge cannot be separated from the methodology which generated it, it was inevitable that feminists would develop a critique of the dominant social science methodology. Feminists were quick to understand that method is not neutral and truth is not objective, simply because the so-called truths generated by the natural science method did not fit their experience. The myth of an objective reality constitutes the life experience of most women who live in a world which denies the existence of their reality. Objective truth has been posited as a standard by which women, in holding to the legitimacy of alternate realities, a multi-dimensional world, have been judged crazy. Thus, objectivity came to be seen by feminists as male subjectivity. In their attempts to reconstruct, that is, rename or speak again about the world, feminists soon came to link the nature of language and its inevitable interaction with consciousness, to the impossibility of a one, true reality. Thus, the claim that science is value-free, objective, and purely rational came to be seen as ideology rather than reality.

For feminists, a critique of traditional methodology also arose from concern with the fact that within the natural scientific method the problems, issues and questions which women consider important, are invisible. They simply cannot be asked. Feminists are concerned with questions of meaning and understanding, phenomena not easily separated from the complex, rich and varied world of human experience. Eliminating the context of human experience, selecting researcher-salient elements and subsequently manipulating them as variables effectively silences the exploration of many questions significant for women. Furthermore, it generates a situation in which research subjects are viewed as isolated objects, a process in which the humanness of the participants is seen as irrelevant, messy and contaminating, a process which, of course, parallels men's treatment of women under patriarchy. Similarly, the idea of the researcher as "objective," that is, detached, unemotional, impartial, impersonal and rational closely mirrors the qualities ideally possessed by "normal" men in this society and thereby is little more than the penetration of patriarchal values into a male-constructed methodology.

Not insignificantly, science and research are almost entirely a male enterprise, the goals of which are causal explanation, lawfulness, prediction and control. Science is inevitably tied to a quest for power in the world and feminists who are committed to undermining patriarchal power are certainly not going to support its traditional methodological stronghold.

Couched within the language of feminist rhetoric and a specific, political concern for the status of women, feminists are saying much the same as others who support the side of verstehen in the empiricism versus verstehen debate. Commonly, a critique of the natural scientific method involves an acknowledgement of multiple realities as opposed to the belief in an objective truth, an attention to the nature and function of language, a realization that methodology determines the questions that can be asked, a concern with questions of meaning and interpretation as opposed to laws of prediction and control, a respect for humanness in context rather than a reduction to objects and variables, and an examination of the inherent values, ethical ramifications and political consequences of research methodologies.

While there is some fundamental agreement within the criticism of traditional social science methodology, there is less consensual development of alternate approaches. This is certainly true within psychology. Not surprisingly, the search for different methodologies has led many a psychologist back into the arms of philosophy and the parameters of the Wundt-Dilthey debate. Certainly it led this psychologist to philosophical hermeneutics, that is, one articulation of the verstehen position. Phenomenology, not hermeneutics, is the popular choice for researchers in psychology who want a methodology other than that of natural science, and this probably has something to do with their relative differences in exposure. However, hermeneutics was chosen in this case for some specific reasons that need, I think, to be directly drawn.

Within psychology, the development of phenomenology as an approach to research presents, for me, two major difficulties. The first is that phenomenology has become such a broad and widely used term as to be almost meaningless. It frequently refers to the general area of qualitative research and to any investigation that has something directly or indirectly to do with experiencing. Therefore, one of the reasons I chose hermeneutics as opposed to phenomenology, was a desire for a more specific and

less popularly polluted context. The second major reason for my choice was phenomenological psychology's ambivalence concerning the existence of "objective reality." Phenomenological psycholoigsts emphasize the importance of examining one's presuppositions in relation to the phenomena to be explored. However, they then tend to suggest that the researcher disengage herself from her presuppositions in order to facilitate a true understanding of the essence of a phenomenon. There hovers a sense of peeling away layers in order to arrive at, unfold, discover the essential or the universal. While it is usually acknowledged that it is impossible to suspend, absolutely, one's presuppositions, the thrust remains an attempt to do so, in order to come ever closer to the essence. Thus, on the whole, the existence of a reality to be discovered, out there, in separation from the observer, is still assumed. It seems to me that this relates to phenomenology's focus on description. The term description places the spotlight on the phenomenon itself such that the activity of the describer recedes into the background. In fact, there is no description without interpretation, the drawing of distinctions by an observer. Hermeneutics reference to interpretation more clearly embodies the observer-observed unity.

To speak of my choice positively, hermeneutics offers a rich and unique articulation of many concepts crucial to the development of the verstehen side of this debate. It develops the idea of conversation and questioning, expounding the notion of "relevant" as opposed to "right" and "wrong." It brings value to the position of openness, of not knowing. It articulates ideas concerning the historicality of understanding, weaving them with the notion of a closed historical and linguistic world, and thereby postulating the impossibility of objective truth. It gives central place to an examination of the nature of language, which spawns rich possibilities concerning the unity of the said and the unsaid and the mutual transformation of personal horizons in the coming together of a participant and a questioner. Not insignificantly, the language of the hermeneuticists is beautifully poetic. It somehow drips with refraction and cannot but remind one of the polysemic nature of language. Moreover, philosophical hermeneutics presents a blatantly constructivist position--that is, a world interpreted is a world created or brought forth as opposed to a world unveiled or discovered.[1]

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[1]It seems to me that hermeneutics also offers rich possibilities for the development of a methodology consistent with a feminist being-in-the-world. It

Philosophical hermeneutics elegantly elaborates many of the distinctions drawn within one side of the Wundt-Dilthey debate. On the whole it functions within the distinctions formulated by the advocates of the verstehen position. While the search for alternate methodologies has led many psychologists back to philosophy it has also led them into, rather than out of the distinctions surrounding this debate. It is rare that the solution to any debate comes from the distinctions within which that debate is being waged. Resolution can only come with a new language, a redrawing of distinctions. It is within this context that the work of recent radical constructivists is important and the constructivist position of hermeneutics finds new salience.

Radical Constructivism: a redrawing of old distinctions

Metalogue: What Is an Instinct?

Daughter: Daddy, what is an instinct?
Father: An instinct, my dear, is a explanatory principle.
D: But what does it explain?
F: Anything--almost anything at all. Anything you want it to explain.
D: Don't be silly. It doesn't explain gravity.
F: No. But that is because nobody wants "instinct" to explain gravity. If they did, it would explain it. We could simply say that the moon has an instinct whose strength varies inversely as the square of the distance. . .
D: But that's nonsense, Daddy.
F: Yes, surely. But it was you who mentioned "instinct," not I.
D: All right--but then what does explain gravity?
F: Nothing, my dear, because gravity is an explanatory principle.
D: Oh.

D: Do you mean that you cannot use one explanatory principle to explain another? Never?
F: Hmm. . .hardly ever. That is what Newton meant when he said, *"hypotheses non fingo."*
D: And what does that mean? Please.
F: Well, you know what "hypotheses" are. Any statement linking together two descriptive statements is an hypothesis. If you say that there was a full moon on February 1st and another on March 1st; and then you link these two observations together in any way, the statement which links them is an hypothesis.
D: Yes--and I know what *non* means. But what's *fingo*?
F: Well--*fingo* is a late Latin word for "make." It forms a verbal noun *fictio* from which we get the word "fiction."
D: Daddy, do you mean that Sir Isaac Newton thought that all hypotheses were just *made up* like stories?

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[3](cont'd) values conversation and dialogue thereby bringing firm philosophical grounding to women's experience of the importance of "woman-talk." It articulates the importance of personal history and experience in the construction of reality. It affirms the existence of multiple realities. And it offers a methodology in which participants can come together in mutual humanness and equality, a process in which the openness and learning of both questioner and story teller are equally important.

F: Yes--precisely that.
D: But didn't he discover gravity? With the apple?
F: No, dear. He invented it.

(Bateson, 1972, pp. 38-39)

The notion of constructivism in psychology is not new and over the course of its history it has had some well known and eminent proponents (e.g., Piaget, 1933). Von Foerster (1984) characterizes the essentials of a constructivist position as invention and action. That is, reality is invented, not discovered; accordingly, my being-in-the-world is active rather than passive. Importantly, I am responsible.

The current articulation of radical constructivism, especially on the part of Humberto Maturana (e.g., 1980, 1983) and Maturana and Varela (1980), is not irrelevant to those century-old distinctions in psychology that find their roots in the Wundt-Dilthey debate. In fact, it is being hailed by some writers (e.g., Dell, 1985; von Glasersfeld, 1984) as an important possibility in relating the Geisteswissenschaften and the Naturwissenschaften. Because of this, and because Maturana's work elegantly addresses the problem of the observer and the epistemological status of objectivity, his ontological biology is being viewed by some (e.g., Dell, 1985; von Foerster, 1984a; 1984b; von Glasersfeld, 1984) as a productive foundation for the social sciences. Maturana begins with biology and neurophysiology and leads us to the realm of the hermeneutic. Because of the methodological ramifications of Maturana's work, its relationship to hermeneutics and its explanatory value for some of the content of this dissertation, I will briefly outline his major conceptualizations.

The central premise of Maturana's ontology of the living is the circularity of organization which is fundamental to living systems. "It is the circularity of its organization that makes a living system a unit of interactions, and it is this circularity that it must maintain in order to remain a living system" (Maturana, 1980, p. 9). Living systems, Maturana contests, are dynamic and function under conditions of continuous structural change, the organization of which is circular in as much as the goal is the continued realization of identity. Significantly, if the organization of a system is circular, then it is also closed, in the sense that it is not wide open to receiving information from the outside. A closed system is unable to absorb information directly from the environment. Put differently, an organizationally closed system does not function in terms of specific input and subsequent

output simply because we cannot specify its behaviour in its interactions with the environment. An important consequence of systemic closure is structural autonomy. Organizationally closed systems are autonomous systems. That is, they function according to their structural individuality, such that, when an organism interacts with some aspect of its environment it is the structure of the organism rather than the structure of the environment that determines how it will respond, or in Maturana's (1983) words, specifies its domains of perturbation.

Experientially, this is nothing new. We know that when we watch a movie with our friends, that same movie will impact each one of us very differently. We will each see it, hear it, understand it and interpret it a little differently, according to our own unique structures. It is not the movie per se which unilaterally determines our response. It is the movie in interaction with our individual structure that brings forth what we see.

If in any given interaction, a system always behaves in accord with its structure, then that system is structurally determined. Maturana's fundamental ontology is that the world is structure-determined, that the behaviour of all composite unities, be they living or not, is determined by their structures (i.e., by components of the unity and by relations among the components). Any composite unity brings to the present a history of which the goal is conservation of organization (i.e., those invariant relations between components) and adaptation (i.e., the coupling of the system with its environment). The structure of a unity specifies what it will interact with and how. In this sense, the ontogeny of an organism does not entail alternatives. Rather, alternatives are descriptive commentaries made aposteori by an observer.

However, while we exist in a world of structure-determined entities, that does not mean we can specify our ontogeny, our future. For Maturana, structure is dynamic rather than static. Living systems in particular live under conditions of continuous structural change, but within an ontogeny of the conservation of organization and adaptation. Every interaction impacts structure in some way. However, it does not causally determine behaviour.

Maturana contends that the notion of causality as it is typically used, is an impossibility. He employs the term instructive interaction to refer to the concept of lineal causality. Instructive interaction claims that A unilaterally determines how B will respond,

that the movie I am watching is singularly responsible for my perceptions. Maturana alternatively suggests that the movie selects my responses and my structure determines them. Dell (1985) uses the analogy:

> Selecting is akin to pushing the Sprite button on a Coke machine. Pushing the button selects the response of the machine (it gives you Sprite), but it does not determine that the machine gives Sprites when the button is pushed. In essence, Maturana is claiming that our everyday use of the word "cause" always implies or threatens to imply a determining in the sense of instructive interaction--whereas "causation" is always only a selecting (p. 8).

Thus while we are deterministic systems moving in the realization of our particular ontological niche, we are, Maturana has said, "deliciously unpredictable." In fact, we necessarily speak about prediction only when we have uncertainty.

However, despite the illusion of instructive interaction we continue to punctuate experience such that cause and effect are attributed to successive events. Certainly, we observe regularities that create expectations or hypotheses for us, and Dell (1984) suggests that our continuing scientific attachment to the notion of instructive interaction may simply be due to our success in predicting the response of organisms to particular environmental stimuli. The psychological experience of "causality," Dell (1985) postulates, arises with our ability to fit ourselves to a variety of situations. As complex unities, living systems participate within many different cognitive and phenomenal domains, or to use Maturana's language, we participate in many different domains of structural coupling. Thus, I exist as a daughter, a sister, a wife, a student, a feminist, a psychologist, a friend, and the like. Interactions comprise fit, match, or coupling. The plasticity inherent in living systems entails a capacity for varied interactions, perturbations and structural change without loss of identity or disintegration. Our experience of causing something to happen, therefore, arises from our ability to fit our structure with that of the structures with which we are dealing.

The epistemological consequence of Maturana's ontology of structure-determinism is that objective knowledge is impossible. We can never know an absolute reality, the nature of "out thereness" undiluted by the stamp of our unique structure. Knowledge is always a function of the interaction between what is "out there"

and the autonomous structure of an organism. Maturana says:

> Knowledge implies interactions, and we cannot step out of our domain of interactions, which is closed. We live, therefore, in a domain of subject-dependent knowledge and subject-dependent reality. . . .In fact, any knowledge of a transcendental absolute reality is intrinsically impossible: if a supposed transcendental reality were to become accessible to description then it would not be transcendental because a description always implies interactions and, hence, reveals only a subject-dependent reality (1978, p. 60).

Thus, as Dell (1985) puts it, we can only ever know the world through the structure-determined "lenses" of our own being. Because this is the case, Maturana would say that we construct or invent our world; that reality is something we bring forth (as opposed to unveil) in concert with our structure-determined nature. The particular reality we bring forth depends upon the particular distinctions we draw. A distinction is always made by an observer immersed in language, and as such, is determined by the structure of the observer, and not by the medium observed. Distinctions, observations or descriptions are always structural interactions with a medium; they can never be the grasping of objective truths about the world.

It is our immersion in language that enables us to draw distinctions and thereby act as an observer. It is our immersion in language that enables us to know our world, and yet prevents us from ever knowing an objective world. Language is a closed domain. Like the universe we are part of it, we take it with us and we cannot look at it from outside of it. An entity is always specified by an operation of distinction drawn by an observer. In speaking about the absolute, the objective, the thing in itself, we make distinctions, which of course are made in language, such that we reveal our operation in language and not the thing itself. So long as we are immersed in language we cannot make statements about the absolute. Because we operate on the basis of distinctions made in language we can never know an objective reality. Maturana argues that the most we can say about the "substratum" is that it allows for language to occur. It can never be known directly or in its fullness, but functions more in the sense of a constraint or an outer limit. Or as Glasersfeld (1984) puts it, all we can ever know about the "real" world is what that world is not.

Maturana has a number of interesting points to make about the nature of language. With others (e.g., Bruner, 1975; Newson & Newson, 1975; Shotter, 1978) he argues that language arises within a social domain; that the prerequisites for its generation are close and recurrent interpersonal relationships, which provide the opportunity for making recurring distinctions, and creating consensuality around those distinctions. Maturana would say language is born out of the realm of structural coupling, structural coupling referring to the complementary relationship between a unity and its medium. As long as a living system lives it will automatically become richly coupled to an environment. When that environment consists of other living systems, the coupling is organized in an interactional system which represents a closed pattern of interaction. Maturana suggests that the continuation of recurrent interactions moves us into the realm of love or desire--without the wanting they would cease to exist. The domain of recurrent interactions allows for distinctions of distinctions in consensuality, that is, language. It allows for the creation of our world in that objects arise in language, with the distinction of distinctions.

Maturana distinguishes between linguistic behaviour and language. Linguistic behaviour entails the co-ordination of conduct, consensual conduct but no possibility of reflection about the consensual conduct. Language, on the other hand, moves us into the realm of the observer. Language comprises a distinction of distinctions in consensuality, that is, awareness of operation in a consensual domain. In order for there to be language, an observer must see that there is co-ordination of conduct. Thus, the world in which we exist as observers is always a world which arises socially, with others, in language. As observers we generate a consensual domain in which we describe a situation of which we may be part. Observation requires performing recurrent distinctions within a consensual domain. Thus, meaning is generated within observer descriptions. Within a system itself there is no meaning, only the dynamics of structural change, the patterns of interactive oupling. Ambiguity also lies solely within the realm of the observer and her descriptions. Meaning and ambiguity arise when one observes interactions and describes a picture which is based on the observer's particular choice of an infinite number of possible distinctions. If one is just there, immersed in a system without the possibility of reflection, there is no language, no meaning, and no ambiguity.

A further implication of the distinctions drawn by Maturana, is that, as human beings immersed in language, we live in what Dell (1985) has called a multiverse rather than a universe. That is, the way each of us speak our world, the various distinctions we draw on the basis of our individual structures, are both unique and legitimate. "In a multiverse, truth is not objective and unitary; rather, it is manifold. Truth, then, is manifest to the observer in each and every distinction which he or she draws" (Dell, 1985, p. 17). Consequently, "truth" or "objectivity" is no more than consensus regarding certain information. Notions of right and wrong, correct and incorrect both scientifically and generally find their basis in consensus amongst a group of observers. In fact, all observations have equally validity. An individual's story is her truth. What she speaks and acts in turn reflects back upon her as it becomes part of her lived experience, part of the medium in which she exists. The nature of language and consciousness means we cannot escape the stories we create; they recur on us as structural perturbations, become a part of our history. It is consensus within a realm of observers that chooses between stories, values one over another.

Maturana finds the beginnings for his conceptualizations in the natural science arena. His fundamental premise of living systems as structure-determined, autonomous and organizationally closed, however, is sufficiently generative to tackle complex ontological and epistemological issues. Consideration of an ensemble of structure-determined, autonomous and organizationally closed entities inevitably leads to the world of language and the realm of the hermeneutic. As von Foerster (1984a; 1984b) says, as soon as we have language, we have interpretation. The two are inseparable. In moving from one structure-determined, autonomous and organizationally closed living system to an ensemble of such living systems, Maturana essentially moves us from the "natural" to the "social" sciences. Yet he does so by way of some fresh distinctions that transcend the traditional distinctions between two previously unreconcilable ways of knowing the world.

While the language and the origins are very different, Maturana and Gadamer come together in some concepts that seem fundamentally important in any consideration of methodology. Maturana's notion of structure is very similar to that of Gadamer's historicality of being. Gadamer echoes Maturana's concept of closure with his metaphor

of the game, in relation to understanding, as a dynamic, internally closed and self generating process. They support each other in their insistence upon the impossibility of an objective reality, and consequently the existence of a "multiverse." The hermeneutic' notion of "relevance" and the constructivists concept of "fit" are very similar. For Maturana and Gadamer both, the position of language is central, such that reflection, description, and meaning, located in the realm of observation, always entail, as Gadamer would put it, an expression of one's historicality, or as Maturana would say, the drawing of a distinction that is determined by one's structure. With structure-coupling comes language and the drawing of distinctions or, in other words, with the social comes language and accordingly, interpretation. Either way, we're landed squarely in the realm of the between.

C. A Collection of Short Stories (or about the themes)

In this section, the spotlight is turned upon the portrait painted, the content or the results presented within this text. It has to do with the question, how does this portrait stand in relation to other paintings commonly hung within the feminist, psychology, and social science galleries? Or, alternately, how does the story spoken by these pages relate to other tales told within feminism, psychology, and the social sciences? Of course, we cannot consider the whole gallery or the whole storybook. That would require something of the nature of an encyclopedia which is not the goal in this case. Therefore, a choice must be made, and I would say my choice of paintings or stories within which to contextualize my tale had something to do with considerations of relevance, richness, and personal interest. Thus, yet again at this level of interpretation, there is another drawing of multiple, arbitrary distinctions. When a discussion of content emerges from a constructivist hermeneutic the goal is less encyclopedic--that is, the listing of references in support of one's findings--and more speculative. Stories brought into contact with the current tale function akin to the metaphorical aspect of language, serving to highlight and expand, thereby illuminating certain aspects, suggesting a new twist, speculating about the sequel, the as yet unwritten.

The exploration of being feminist and living with a man, which unfolds within the pages of this dissertation, unquestionably immerses the reader in the realm of the between. What is brought forth is one composite picture of seven women's lived

experience of the interhuman, of their daily being together with a male partner. What is created is one picture of these women's perceptions of what occurs in their concrete immersion in the world between themselves and their partners. This is the reality of the between. Therefore, in order to speak about some of the themes presented in Chapter IV, use will be made of the concept of "the realm of the between" as it is developed by Friedman (1983) in extension of the work of Martin Buber (1965; 1966).[9]

Friedman (1983) argues that "an ontology of the between" has generally been neglected within psychology, that there has been little attention to that sphere in which person meets person.[10] Yet that is the very sphere, Friedman claims, in which humans come to being, in which individuals find their reality again and again. He characterizes the realm of the between as that arena in which individuals meet and become fully present to one another such that one touches the mystery of the other in the very depths of one's being. It is that sphere which is created in the coming together of two individuals, which is common to each but extends beyond the personal horizons of each.[11] The solitude of the individual is breached and the we or the between, created. Thus, it is in the interhuman, that the human comes into being, that the I and the Thou meet, a process that can only occur through lived dialogue or, to use Buber's phrase, through "speech-with-meaning." Living in the realm of the between entails bringing together two movements, the second, entering into relation, presupposes a first, setting at a distance. We can only enter into relationship with a separate entity, a being who stands at some distance from us. It is in the realm of the between, in our relationships with each other, that we confirm each other and come

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[9]I also chose this notion of "the realm of the between" because it is entirely consistent with the basic premises of Gadamer's and Maturana's work. Thus, throughout the course of this exploration three conceptualizations of "the realm of the between" become woven together, thereby highlighting different angles of its rich and varied face.

[10]Friedman (1983) attributes this neglect of "the sphere in which person meets person" to the fact that "it possesses no smooth continuity" (p. 4). I disagree with him on this point. I would speculate that the realm of the between is bound to receive little attention within a male constructed psychology, when one takes into consideration Carol Gilligan's (1982) ideas that men tend to define themselves through separation and that women attempt to define themselves through connection. Thus, a women-constructed psychology is likely to turn on the hub of the sphere of the between and I think we already have some evidence of this from feminist research. In fact, Friedman frequently draws upon feminist writings in order to support his ideas.

[11]This, of course, recalls the hermeneutic encounter, which is a similar conception of the realm of the between. It also echoes Maturana's (1983) notion of the creation of consensus through the dance of reciprocal interactions.

into our unique being. That is, the coming to be of a self occurs not in one's relation to oneself but by the confirmation in which a person knows herself to be made present in her uniqueness by another. What Buber calls "making present" has to do with opening to and allowing the other in their wholeness, unity, and uniqueness. This is the I-Thou relation which stands in opposition to the I-It relation in which the other is reduced and categorized, a detached object of observation, unallowed an expression of their wholeness, unity, and uniqueness. I-It is distancing without relating, making more distant.[12]

The realm of the between comes to live through dialogue.[13] Friedman characterizes dialogue as "a mutual sharing in reciprocal presentness of the unique." He goes on to say, "the unique implies otherness but otherness capable of entering into communion" (p. 12). Personal uniqueness comes into being in the realm of the between and can only be known through dialogue. Friedman distinguishes the unique from the different or the individual, suggesting that the latter are known only in comparison and contrast, while the unique is known only in and for itself. The unique is what makes a person of value in herself. When I come to another from a position of being open to her uniqueness she is likely to allow me to enter her wholeness and her centre. When I come from a position of comparison and detached contemplation, she is not likely to show her self and I am not likely to know her in her true humaness, as a person. Friedman asserts that we cannot know our personal uniqueness directly in relation to ourselves. We come to know it only as we enter into dialogue with others. Consequently, we realize ourselves as persons only through going out again and again to meet the "Thou," a movement which entails both the "courage to address and the courage to respond."

This leads us to the concept of trustworthiness, which is also created in the life of the dialogue, the realm of the between. Thus, trustworthiness is not something that resides in a person as an integral characteristic. Rather, it is a context created in partnership. Friedman speaks of existential trust as the "holy insecurity" in which one opens to meet the other in the present, not knowing, rather than holding to a categorization and an appearing to know. Trustworthiness in partnership recognizes that a

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[12]Buber distinguishes between the "social" and the "interhuman," such that the "social" includes both the I-Thou and the I-It relations, of which most interpersonal relationships are a mixture. The "interhuman," however, refers only to genuine dialogue and the I-Thou relationship.

[13]The importance of dialogue inevitably finds a central position in any articulation of the between. This has certainly been the case with Gadamer and Maturana.

genuine relationship is two-sided and, therefore, beyond our control. Meeting in trust is a risk as there is no guarantee that we will find the response we desire. Thus, genuine trust is a readiness to move into meeting with another, and if we do not receive the desired response, to be prepared yet again to venture forth.

> The life of dialogue realizes the unity of the contraries in meeting others and in holding one's ground when one meets them. This is the existential trust that "all real living is meeting," that meaning is open and accessible in the lived concrete, that our true concern is not the unraveling of mysteries but the way of the human being in partnership with creation (Friedman, 1983, p 18).

The coming together of meeting another and yet remaining true to one's self is nowhere more evident than in an intimate relationship. In any partnership one enters into relation with otherness. In creating an intimate I-Thou relationship over time one is led to "vital acknowledgement of many-faced otherness--even in the contradiction and conflict with it" (Friedman, 1983, p. 19). To affirm difference especially amidst the difficulty of conflict, to truly meet the other's address while holding one's own ground brings a communion which transforms the limits of individual being, and connects one with the true mystery of oneself.

Confirmation is an integral part of genuine dialogue. Confirmation is basic to the process of becoming uniquely human, simply because we exist as a self, at once separate and in relation. To enter into true partnership, a relationship in which person meets person, requires mutual confirmation in which each person recognizes and allows the other in her or his uniqueness.

Affirmation

Affirmation titles the first collection of themes presented in this text. Considering them in light of Friedman's articulation of the realm of the between prompts interesting observation and speculation. Initially, the term "Affirmation" suggests that these conversationalists are in partnerships of mutual confirmation. The first theme "Nurturing" has to do with their feeling loved and valued, accepted as they are, supported and nurtured in their being. There is frequent use of the phrase, "he values me," suggesting a bringing to presence of the women's uniqueness within this relationship. In turn this

implies an acceptance of otherness in one's partner, as Friedman (1983) asserts that we can only sense our uniqueness when we allow and come to touch the uniqueness of another. Trustworthiness was an inherent aspect of this theme. A perception of mutual trust on the part of these women suggests the confidence to be open and to not know, a comfortable combination of meeting another while embracing the essence of oneself, in effect, a coming together of an I and a Thou. Thus, the experience of nurturing expressed by these women is but one side of a mutually confirming coming together of two persons. Inevitably, such a coming together creates a context in which the "I" dissolves and the "we" emerges.

It is the "we" that captures the essence of the second theme, "Sharing." The togetherness of shared values and activities is spoken about here. So, too, is a more fundamental togetherness that might be called dialogue. The words of these women lend credence to the notion that the realm of the between, the meeting of person with person comes to creation in living dialogue. Good communication was unanimously spoken of as an essential, positive aspect of their relationships. As they speak of listening to each other and understanding one another, there is certainly the sense of creating a common unity, of building the essential "we," that is, of coming together in communion. It is in these women's perceptions of a strong nonverbal connection, a shared 'soul sisterhood' with their male partners that we touch Friedman's sense of the possibility of dialogue as silent and monologue as spoken. Similarly, this is consistent with Maturana's (1983) notion of consensus: with consensus comes communion or dialogue as nothing need be said; with nonconsensus comes conflict or monologue when much is said and little is heard.

The third theme, within those collected under the title of "Affirmation" had to do with the sense these women had of feeling free to be, free to express themselves and expand their being-in-the-world. Again, this suggests an I-Thou meeting in which the conversationalists do not experience the restriction of being related to as an It, reduced to an easily controlled category, but rather feel the richness of themselves becoming. Thus, within this context of confirmation, within which a unity of we-ness is created, the participants express a sense of "an opportunity just to be me," to come to self hood in the only way that is possible, through the meeting and confirmation of another.

Feeling challenged and stimulated by their relationships, acknowledging that they learn from these partnerships captures the conversationalists' expression of the next theme. This theme recalls, for me, Friedman's discussion of Martin Buber's 1957 dialogue with Carl Rogers. Concerning the role of confirmation in the process of becoming, Rogers suggested that an affirmation which says, "I accept you as you are" is both necessary and sufficient. Buber, on the other hand, believed that such affirmation is merely the beginning of dialogue, of the I-Thou meeting, and must be distinguished from confirmation, which has to do with a becoming over time. Confirmation entails not only acceptance of the other, but also "the wrestling with one against oneself." Yet it is a wrestling with a recognition and nourishing of potential that occurs within a context of mutuality or consensus. This is the co-creation of becoming, the transformation of personal limits that can occur through an I-Thou coupling, the recognition of and movement towards the beyond that hangs, probably unsaid behind the meeting in the present. The notions of challenge and stimulation expressed by these women appear quite consistent with Buber's distinction of confirmation as opposed to affirmation. In fact, many of the women expressly spoke of choosing partners whom they felt would stimulate personal change in themselves. In accord with their picture of their potential they chose to come together with a man who, in their assessment, would facilitate the unfolding of their self, a man who would co-create their becoming.

It was surprising for me, in listening to the specifics of what women felt they were learning in their relationships with their male partners, to hear them speak of qualities that have been traditionally characterized as feminine--openness, gentleness, patience, tolerance, spirituality, playfulness. Therefore, I offer some speculation in regard to this. Women have traditionally existed--and in general still do exist--in an I-It relationship to Men. They have been objectified, reduced to a few contradictory, but convenient categories (e.g., madonna/whore) and in effect, set at a distance. The possibility of an I-Thou relation between Women and Men has been the exception rather than the rule. When one is objectified, one is likely to protect rather than to show oneself. Feminism has brought an acute awareness of the objectification of women by men and an understandable self-protection in response. In protecting ourselves, women in turn have put men at a distance, categorizing them as "the enemy" or at least somewhat

untrustworthy, thereby relieving ourselves of the risk of having to meet them as persons and probably suffer again from the lack of an authentic human response. Distantiation and self-protection are closed and frequently aggressive positions. For many women this is the only viable way of surviving the patriarchy. However, when a feminist happens to "meet" a man, in effect comes together with a man in mutual humanness (such that she is no longer just "feminist" and he is no longer just "enemy"), then we have the beginning of dialogue and the creation of the realm of the between. Dialogue, an entering into communion, rests upon many of those qualities that these women identified as learning in their coupling context--openness, gentleness, tolerance (i.e., acceptance of the unique), fearlessness (i.e., the courage to address and the courage to respond), and spirituality (i.e., a coming to one's soul in the creation of the "cosmic We"). Thus, it may not be so surprising that participation in a mutually confirming relationship would bring, in the becoming of the self, those very qualities that we have stifled in our objectification by Men. In fact, the notion of becoming over time, rather than merely accepting what is, suggests that the more appropriate title for this collection of themes, might have been "Confirmation," not "Affirmation."

The two older participants in this exploration brought expression to a unique thematic refrain within the topic of "Affirmation." Hand in hand with their articulations about valuing the confirmation extant in their relationships, came a concern for how things might be different should one of them die. An appreciation of their togetherness brought a contemplation of possible aloneness. When one considers how much the becoming of self is created in the realm of the between, in the mutual confirmation of another, then it is inevitable that the death of the other may be feared as in some ways heralding the death of the self. Of course, the twin face is the possibility such an event holds for the re-creation of the self. In this regard, a story told by von Foerster (1984b) about a conversation with his friend Viktor Frankl, comes to mind. There was a man who, since his wife's death, had to all intents and purposes ceased to live. He moved through time in a state of daily vegetation. After one session with Frankl there was a marked change in his being-in-the-world. The man was beginning to live again. Von Foerster asked Frankl what he had done and Frankl replied, "We see ourselves through the eyes of the other. When that man's wife was dead, he was blind; he couldn't see himself anymore. Yet when he

saw that he couldn't see, when he saw that he was blind, he began to be able to see again."

Ambivalence

Friedman (1983) asserts that every relationship is a mixture of an I-Thou and an I-It meeting. The I-Thou, the consensus inherent in the relationships explored in this dissertation, came to expression within the topic of "Affirmation." The fringes of consensus in these couplings, that area that swings between an I-Thou and an I-It meeting is to be found under the topic named "Ambivalence."

Not surprisingly, an important aspect of "ambivalence" was these women's feelings towards the maleness of their partners. Maleness, of course, is the very embodiment of otherness. As such, it draws, attracts, and intrigues. Yet at the same time it holds the possibility of sudden disconnection, separateness. For these women maleness embraced not only the physical, but also the men's perceptions of and being-in-the-world, and their verbal expression thereof. Ambivalence towards maleness can be conceptualized in terms of uniqueness versus difference. In an acceptance and enjoyment of their partner's otherness these women open to and confirm the unique in the men, a process which requires the atmosphere of trust and dialogue described within "Affirmation." Yet there are always limits to one's courage to genuinely address and respond. Accordingly, there are limits to confirmation. Friedman speaks of confirmation as an "undeserved grace." We cannot will to be confirmed and we cannot even will to confirm. We cannot determine the other's response just as he cannot determine our response. We can but meet the present moment with the resources called forth in us by that moment. Because the self is a dynamic coming to be in a present interaction, otherness that is met as uniqueness on one occasion, may be distantiated as difference on another occasion. It is that co-created atmosphere of mutual confirmation and dialogue, or the lack, thereof, that is likely to distinguish between the two. To use Maturana's words, it will depend upon the distinctions drawn by the couple in a given moment. The basic distinction of otherness brings with it the possibility of a finer differentiation into uniqueness or difference. When otherness is seen as uniqueness, the setting at a distance is followed by a moving into relation. However, when otherness is seen as difference, distance is maintained. The women express this very clearly with phrases such as, "he feels distant, like one of them" or "I

can't make the connection."

The otherness inherent in maleness holds considerable power for feminists. It is not just maleness. I would suggest that maleness connotes a whole system of patriarchal connection, which is supported by the women's membership in a second realm of the between, the feminist community. As such, the distinction of male otherness as difference is not always easily transformed into uniqueness. According to Friedman (1983), all individuals stand not only in person-to-person and person-to-family relations, but also person-to-community or society relations. This brings an inevitable tension between personal calling and social affiliation. Each one of us will attempt to establish ourselves as the person we are and, of course, risk failure in doing so. Friedman emphasizes that to "stand in this tension, however, is to insist that one's confirmation in society also be in some significant sense a confirmation of oneself as a unique person who does not fit any social category" (p. 57). The heterosexual feminist stands amidst this tension. While the feminist community provides invaluable confirmation for many aspects of her coming to be, as a woman, it does not offer clear confirmation of her heterosexuality. The decision to pursue a full becoming of herself and enter a mutually confirming, intimate relationship with a man brings personal/community tension but also an assertion of self, an allowing of personal uniqueness. Friedman suggests that the tension is never truly resolved by renouncing either community or personal confirmation. There remains the deep need for both. To stand within this tension, as a heterosexual feminist, is to stand in ambivalence towards maleness. To stand within this tension is to stand amidst the possibility for conflict, on the one hand, and the possibility for genuine personhood, on the other hand.

Women's ambivalence towards otherness in their partners that did not necessarily hinge upon their being male arises less from the tension between personal calling and community affiliation and more from the limits to confirmation inherent in their relationships. Thus, the Complement/Balance theme, which has to do with otherness in terms of personal characteristics or style sees again a switch between otherness defined as uniqueness and otherness defined as difference. However, the women's expression of this theme sparks a further speculation for me. Whether it was their partner's spending habits, physical adeptness, or emotional sensitivity, these women were attracted to particular attributes in the men for personal possibilities in their own becoming. When

mutual confirmation was present, that is, confirmation of the potential self, of the to-become, otherness was enjoyed and appreciated as unique. Yet it seems to me there is a delicate balance between affirmation of what is, and confirmation of what might be. Thus, otherness was distantiated and conceptualized as difference when it was not seen to be confirming of what is. Therefore, a woman can say on the one hand, "I've always been attracted to his grace, his outdoorsishness. . . .Often, I think, this is a great opportunity for me to learn," and, on the other hand, "other times, I won't do anything with him. I feel totally incapable, like he's always waiting, and how can he really want me along. . .and at those times I totally resent his ability."

This tension between the need for affirmation and the need for confirmation, being accepted as one is and being confirmed as one might yet be, is also apparent in the third "Ambivalence" theme, "Challenge / Support." On the one hand there stands Maria and Jean, for whom their relationships initially offered a balance of affirmation and confirmation such that they experienced considerable positive, personal transformation. Yet, for these two women, their relationships do not currently speak to their becoming. There is an affirmation of "is-ness" but little drawing towards what might be. Thus, they speak of boredom and little challenge. There is a sense of deadness in contrast to the aliveness present in the interhuman when there is the presence of, and therefore, tension between affirmation and confirmation. On the other pole there sits Toni, and particularly, Manon. They share, in their coupling, probably the least creation of consensus, of mutual affirmation, acceptance of present being. Especially Manon and her partner bring to their relationship more of a focus on how each other might be, at times to the neglect of accepting how the other is. Thus, the balance for these womens errs on the side of too much challenge and too little support.

Lastly, of the four women who had children, three expressed ambivalence regarding their partner's interactions with their sons and their daughters. At times they delighted in the men's being with their children. At other times they were critical. In looking at what the women had to say about their partner's fathering, interactions were critically perceived as being different, as opposed to valued as being unique, when they were seen to fall into that category generally termed "typically male." The women expressed their criticism with words such as these: "He's not as empathetic as he could be," "he orders

them. . .and he won't hear," "he'll let them walk all over him and then suddenly blow up," "he'll make value statements about that was a dumb thing to do." This is interesting to me in relation to Carol Gilligan's (1982) suggestion that while women attempt to define themselves through connection or relation, men tend to define themselves through separation. The common element of each of these expressions is distantiation on the part of the men, a movement out of an I-Thou relation with their children, a putting at a distance. It is not surprising that for these women, with their focus on the between, such interactions on the part of their partners touches the limits of their will to confirm. Conversely, behaviours that represented a connecting with, even although the expression might be quite different from that of the mother, were unanimously supported and appreciated by these women. For example, "the fun things the kids would say they did with their dad," "he's nurturing with the children."

Difficulty

There was extensive variety amongst these women's articulations of the difficulties experienced in their relationships. However, they did come together in three themes--values, affective expression, and sexuality. One way of conceptualizing difficulty in the between is in terms of consensus versus nonconsensus. Areas experienced as difficult were fundamentally areas of nonconsensus. This is the arena of non communion, the realm in which each draws and holds to her / his individual distinctions such that there is little merging or appreciation of the other's distinctions. This is the arena in which otherness is fundamentally conceptualized as difference and is thereby experienced as non confirming. This is where we encounter monologue as opposed to dialogue. Typically, difficulty does not lie per se in a partner's different taste in clothes or lack of affective expression, for example, but rather in the woman's experience of this otherness as severing the connection between her and her mate. Women's focus on relating, on the between, is especially evident in the words in which these conversationalists describe the difficult aspects of their relationships. Difficulty always has to do with difference (as opposed to uniqueness), and subsequently, with a lack of connection, an inability to create togetherness.

These women's expressions of their reality do not support the implications of the theory of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980), that all heterosexual relations within patriarchy are necessarily coercive or compulsory. If this were to be the case, we would expect women, in articulating the difficulties they experience in their relationships, to speak about feeling restricted, dominated, imposed upon, to experience a lack of choice, a lack of power and control. However, we have seen within "Affirmation" that these participants' coupling in fact provides them with an experience of freedom, choice, and equal power. Thus, I would argue that these relationships are neither coercive nor compulsory, and that difficulty or disharmony arises not from feelings of coercion or domination, but rather from the experience of difference and lack of connection.

In speaking of how women define themselves through connection, in their relationships, Gilligan (1982) suggests that women are likely to see difference in terms of the fracture of human connection. It is within this context that a difference in values can be experienced as a difficulty by these women. Interestingly, only one woman named conflict with her feminist value system as a major source of difficulty in her partnership. It seems that confirmation of her feminism, basic consensus around her definition of reality was a fundamental condition for entering into relation with a man, for most of these women. Thus, as these were continuing relationships (with the exception of Jean), it is to be assumed that the limits to confirmation expressed in the differences in values, were not perceived to significantly interfere with the participants' expression of selfhood.

For Manon and her partner there was least consensus regarding a feminist value system. It was Manon, also, who felt she valued the importance of her partnership significantly more than her partner, Alain. In this respect, this couple probably represented most closely a "traditional" heterosexual coupling. With the other participants there is a sense of male partners holding the relationship in as much importance as the women hold it; a sense of men relating and exploring the parameters of connection. Manon, on the other hand, speaks of feeling secondary to Alain's life plans which she understands he will not alter for her. On her part, however, she knows she would alter her life plans to accommodate the relationship. This is consistent with Gilligan's contention that the importance of relationships in women's lives leads them to alter rules and plans in order to preserve their connections; men, on the other hand, are more likely to abide by the rules

and plans and depict relationships as replaceable.

It is not surprising to find that the men's affective expression was the cause of some chagrin for most of these women. Men are typically socialized to "control their emotions," to an affective lack of expression. The one emotion generally allowed uncensured expression is that of anger. On the other hand, women's affective socialization tends to inhibit the expression of anger, although other emotions are generally allowed (e.g., Miller, 1976). Some of these women had difficulty with their partner's expression of anger. Others had difficulty with the lack of emotional expression on the part of their partner. Both occasions created a severing of connection for the women and again, it is in that movement that the experience of difficulty arose. Women tend to fear the expression of anger and pull back, distance ourselves in such situations. On the other hand, in the face of an emotionally unexpressive male, we touch the limits of our resources to create betweenness. As Friedman notes, we cannot will to confirm.

Friedman also suggests that the problematic of confirmation is nowhere more apparent than in sex and love. Certainly sexuality had been an area of some discord at one time or another for four of the seven participants in this study. Friedman (1983) says, "Sex, which should be the crown of the interhuman, often in our culture becomes the opposite--the mark of its inauthenticity" (p. 89). With feminists he asserts that sexuality is too often speckled with mistrust, objectification, and domination, an I-It meeting. Friedman suggests that it takes tremendous courage to address the intensity of an I-Thou meeting in sexuality. Certainly, the lack of confirmation of women in the sexual arena has been extensively documented. Within the context of this study, the two older women, Helen and Toni, reached, at times, the limits of confirmation in their experience of pressure to be sexual irrespective of their desires. Two of the younger women, Jean and Maria, touched the limits of mutual confirmation in the sexual arena with their experience of feeling closed sexually towards their partners. In both instances, the inability to mutually confirm one another in the sexual sphere was articulated as a difficulty because of the separation and disconnection it embodied. With Jean this was ultimately felt to interfere significantly with expression of her selfhood and she left the relationship some months after our conversation.

Task Division

The division of household chores was once the metaphor, the capsule within which feminists battled for equality with male partners. Whether or not a man cheerfully executed at least half of the domestic tasks was the standard upon which a feminist heterosexual relationship was evaluated. As Mainardi (1970) put it in "The Politics of Housework," "The measure of your oppression is his resistance." Over the last decade there has been less emphasis in feminist writing on the division of household chores and the metaphor within which to illuminate the coming together of a feminist with a man has moved elsewhere. Perhaps this is in accord with a general situation of increased consensuality in the division of housework. Certainly for the participants of this exploration, the realm of housework captured little of their attention or reflection. It was an arena of minimal discord and much consensus. In fact, the younger women entered their relationships with an assumption that household tasks would be shared. The older women, on the other hand, had moved towards equitable role sharing over a number of years.

The experience of these women might be considered to be at odds with recent research on role sharing (e.g., Haas, 1982; Hartmann, 1981; Hiller, 1984) which consistently suggests that while in dual-career couples the male partner does tend to do more housework than the male partner in couples in which the woman is not employed in the outside work world, the ideal of role-sharing is rarely attained and in fact the man does little more than help out with the woman's traditional responsibilities. Time-budget studies suggest, for example, that it is a small minority of men who contribute to cleaning, cooking, and laundry. One might speak to this discrepancy by arguing that while the present study explores women's perceptions of role division it can say little about "actual" role division.[14]

However, I prefer an alternate speculation. In fact, every male partner spoken about in this exploration did clean, cook, and do laundry. That all but one of the participants perceived that they did so as often as the women did, and in fact trusted their equal participation such that the division of domestic chores was left largely unstructured,

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[14]Of course we have seen that this distinction between a "perceived" event and an "actual" event is entirely arbitrary, the "actual" event merely being someone else's distinctions about the occurrence, collected or arrived at in a different way.

is not unimportant. I would suggest that there is a difference between feminist coupling and dual-career coupling. A dual-career couple need not partake of a feminist value system and may indeed be more likely to generate the "superwoman phenomenon," where the woman is essentially holding down two jobs in contrast to her partner's one (e.g., Hartmann, 1981). That is, the man's equal participation in housework need not be expected by either one of the couple. In contrast, a feminist is likely to assume her partner's participation in role sharing.

Role sharing has been seen to be related to having had a working mother, having a tertiary education, for the women, having a commitment to paid employment, and for the men, having partaken in some traditionally female chores during childhood socialization (e.g., Haas, 1982). These four factors were certainly present amongst the current study's participants. The majority of women and their partners had had working mothers. The majority of participants had some post secondary education. All women were committed to their involvement in the workforce, and in speaking of their partners many of the women suggested they had experienced some non-traditional socialization. Therefore, in contrast to dual-career couples, it seems likely that feminist, heterosexual couples are likely to co-create an equitable division of household chores.

Economics

Conversationalists' experience of times of economic dependence, and Manon's current experience in relation to that of the other participants, brought to sharp relief the importance of work and subsequent economic independence for these women. When women were working and financially independent, partnership disharmony had little to do with issues of power or compulsion and more to do with the experience of otherness and disconnection. In a situation of economic dependence, on the other hand, disharmony was conceptualized more in terms of domination and lack of choice (alternately, compulsion), conferring more closely with the conclusions of the theory of compulsory heterosexuality. Such dynamics might be played out in any number of possible arenas. For Manon it was housework, and in particular dishes. For Toni it was money and the power to buy what she desired, and for Helen it was the free expression of emotion.

Each of these participants spoke of work and economic independence as somehow integral in the foundation of many of the positive aspects of their relationship--feeling trusting and safe, equal and free. Such an articulation suggests that the twin factor of paid employment / economic independence may be instrumental in shifting the conceptualization of disharmony in the relationship from domination to disconnection. The research on dual-career couples suggests, not surprisingly, that a woman's involvement in a career does not necessarily ensure a change in the power relations within the family (e.g., Hartmann, 1981). Nevertheless, while it may not be a sufficient condition for such change, it may currently be a necessary condition.

While power is a dynamic relation co-created in the between in patterns that touch a variety of arenas, the sphere of paid work appears to be of crucial significance. Feminists have identified patriarchal exclusion of women from the paid work place as a primary form by which male power is manifested and maintained (e.g., Barry, 1979; Luxton, 1982). In the family the economic dependence of a woman on her male partner frequently translates into a domination-subordination relation which has been likened to serfdom or slavery. There has always been a strong current of contempt for housewives. The work undertaken by the housewife is generally held in little value and, therefore, rarely seen as productive labour. In fact, attitudes towards housework are so entrenched in both women and men that they appear to preclude the possibility of an equal coming together of a "working" man and a "non-working" woman. Feminists assert, however, that women's unpaid labour directly and indirectly subsidizes men's paid labour (e.g., Eichler, 1981). The major forms of indirect subsidy for a "working partner" are his maintenance (that is, keeping him in clothes, food, and clean shelter, for example) and the maintenance of their children. Women are seen to discharge their economic debt through the physical and emotional care of their male partner and their children. Therefore, Eichler says

> The contemporary family is a quasi-feudal unit in so far as a wife works but this work does not entitle her to minimum pay. Instead, like the serf of old, she is entitled to protection in the form of being able to expect her husband to provide for her. . .family wealth is usually not owned by both spouses. As long as one spouse, usually the husband, controls the money, any money that is spent by the other spouse, usually the wife, is spent only with his approval.

> Money is spent by the wife on items that the husband approves of. The wife, therefore, does not own the husband's money, but is merely purchasing goods on his behalf, although she may have a fair amount of leeway in making small decisions (1981, p. 60).

Eichler's comments certainly fit with the experiences of this study's participants. Economic dependence brought an expectation that the woman should perform all household and childcare duties (e.g., "he expected me to do the dishes because he was covering most of my rent") and it placed women in the position of having to ask for money and negotiate how they might spend it (e.g., he would decide how much to dole out to me. . .and whether he thought I needed it or not). It is within this context that paid work and economic independence become so highly valued by these women. In essence they provided the possibility for the transformation of traditional, "compulsory" patterns of interaction and definition, thereby comprising, perhaps, the essential components for a heterosexual I-Thou meeting.

Sexuality

Sexuality is emerging within feminism once again as an important topic for consideration.[11] The yardstick by which the coming together of feminism and patriarchy is judged in intimate relationships, has moved from the kitchen to the bedroom. Certainly it is in the bedroom that feminism and heterosexuality meet most directly. This is probably a contributing factor to these women's experience of sexuality as an intense and powerful aspect of their lives. Within the topic of sexuality, there was a thematic expression concerning the power of sexuality for this study's participants. In its terribleness and in its glory, sexual sharing carried great impact.

> Feminists in heterosexual relationships have to grapple with male definitions, male assumptions and male power in one of the most intimate areas of our lives, involving some of our deepest feelings, at times when we often feel at our most vulnerable (Hamblin, 1983, p. 105).

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[11]For example there has recently been the publication of several anthologies of articles on female sexuality, the most notable being Sex and Love, edited by Cartledge and Ryan (1983), Powers of Desire, edited by Snitow, Stansell, and Thompson (1983), and Pleasure and Danger, edited by Vance (1984).

Typically, heterosexual feminisits have been offered a choice between two alternatives, neither of which allows full address in the becoming richness and uniqueness of our selves. To accept male-defined heterosexuality uncritically or to withdraw totally from heterosexual relationships demands a denial of confirmation in terms of some aspect of the self. Such an either / or alternative also negates the realm of the between and the possibility of women's agency in creating and changing reality.

Struggling for an I-Thou meeting with a man in sexuality takes both courage and trust, knowing as we do as feminists, the pervasivenesns of Man's I-It objectification of women in this arena. In the case of this exploration women spoke, in consistency with their orientation towards the realm of the between, of the incredible power of sexuality to connect them deeply with or separate them completely from their partners. As Friedman (1983) notes, we are vulnerable here as nowhere else. It is in sexuality that we most keenly feel and fear the I-Thou / I-It distinction. Likewise, it is in sexuality that monologue is most frequently masked as dialogue.

The tendency of the patriarchy to come to female sexuality in an I-It meeting, to distantiate and objectify cannot be disputed. It is evident everywhere in the sexual violence of rape, incest, battering, pornography, sexual harassment, advertising, and the like. Rollo May suggests that to be human means to exist on the boundary between the anonymous and the personal and as such sexuality "always skates on the edge of exploitation of the partner."[16] Friedman (1983) expresses a similar notion a little differently, suggesting that a genuinely intimate meeting demands a recurring confrontation and confirmation of otherness. This is present in stark apparence with the tension of opposites inherent in the coming together of male and female. A confirmation of otherness requires holding one's ground yet meeting the other in openness from that ground.

Robin Morgan (1984) echoes Buber's I-Thou / I-It distinction when she differentiates between what she calls sexual intelligence and sexual fundamentalism. She sees as the components of sexual intelligence curiosity and desire (i.e., uniqueness) in which sexual passion involves a profound and vulnerable knowing and being known. Sexual fundamentalism, on the other hand, has to do with the reduction, distantiation, trivialization, or objectification of sexual complexity, energy, desire, curiosity, and

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[16]Quoted in Friedman (1983), p. 92.

freedom. Morgan argues that it is in the distantiation from sexual energy, the attempt to control and codify its intrinsic movement and change, which rests upon the incomplete truth that the volatility of energy makes it untrustworthy and potentially destructive, that sexuality is linked with violence.

While the above comments offer some theoretical speculation within which to consider these women's expressions of the power of sexuality, they also fit very closely with their articulation of their lived experience. All women but one gave voice to the pleasure sexuality gave them. Their words portray an intimate knowledge of that delicate balance involved in meeting another without losing oneself. They express their experience of joy in an I-Thou meeting and of pain with an I-It encounter. Many of the participants spoke about how confirmation of their sexuality generated a deeper and wider confirmation of themselves as unique persons, thereby echoing Friedman's assertion that an I-Thou sexuality brings the possibility of a mutual knowing and being known with which we regain our own body and touch the possibility of ourself through knowing our partner's body and moving to an essential knowing of his self. An aspect of this theme was also these women's keen awareness of the energy of sexuality, the movement and change that could spell both pleasure and danger.

Feminists have tended to focus on the danger of sexuality. Yet an overemphasis on the dangers of sexuality runs the risk of making speech about sexual pleasure taboo. To ignore sexual pleasure, as Carole Vance (1984) suggests, does not serve to empower women or make the world a safer place. Rather, it merely tends to victimize women and deny them their agency, strength and energy. Vance (1984) suggests that the experience of "sexual pleasure in whatever form has become a great guilty secret amongst feminists" (p. 7) and has led to abstract sexual theory which bears little relationship to everyday life.

The words of the participants in this study generally portray women with agency creating a realm of the between in which they might come to explore their unique expression of themselves separate from anyone else's dictates--a freedom that feminists, in fact, have long been calling for. This is certainly evident in the thematic expression of the freedom to say "yes" or to say "no." Even when sexuality was a difficult and dreaded aspect of the relationship there was no atmosphere of coercion. I would speculate that the freedom of choice these women experienced in their sexual relationships created and

was created by a context of safety, trust and control which allowed them to let go into their sexual meeting, and thereby explore their boundaries of autonomy and control. As Morgan says, "If you feel you have control, you are free to abandon it, knowing as you do that it is yours to pick up again whenever you choose (1984, p. 131).

That feminism impacted these women's sexuality is hardly surprising. As George Eliot once wrote, "There is no private life which is not determined by a wider public life."[17] That each woman reacted differently in the embrace of feminism in her sexuality is also to be expected, following Maturana's illustration of living systems as structurally closed. For some women feminism opened the possibility of an I-Thou meeting in sexuality, providing the words, arguments, and courage to insist upon their own authenticity. For other women, feminism contributed to transforming a sexual encounter with a man into an I-It meeting. The pain and anger of the insights involved in feminism, an absorption of images of the penis as necessarily battering and violent, requires a response for survival in many women of closing, distancing, and objectifying in relation to men. The risks of opening to an I-Thou meeting are too great and are felt to hold the seeds of the destruction rather than the confirmation of the self. Thus, feminism also provided the words, arguments, and courage to insist upon separation from men. Certainly, even the majority of the women in this study, women who are to some extent meeting in an I-Thou relation with a man, express some surprise that they are in fact doing so, their private realm of the between, contrasting somewhat with the more public I-It desert.

Relationships with Women

Relationships with other women were typically characterized by participants as a "soul sisterhood." An easy connection was felt with other women, a deep knowing that had to do with understanding and feeling understood, being located similarly in the world, meeting with women as an extension of one's own being-in-the-world. When women spoke of their relationships with women friends there was a sense of coming home to a known place and a familiar language, the stepping out of being a stranger in a strange land. Overwhelmingly, women were conceptualized as similar as opposed to different. When otherness was experienced with women friends it tended to be appreciated as uniqueness

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[17]Quoted in Morgan, 1984, p. 128.

rather than difference. In their bonding with other women these participants found a deep confirmation of their own unique selves--"women are my grounding," "women keep me sane."

Within the background of feminism, women find in their dialogue with other women a confirmation of integral aspects of their being that have found little but categorization and non confirmation within the patriarchy. For many women it is in their relationships with other women that they first experience an I-Thou relating, a meeting in mutuality that is so basic to the becoming of the self. To speak about this in Maturana's language would be to say that feminist women share many basic distinctions. We have created together a large realm of consensus within which we can open to the silence of genuine dialogue. Because feminist women confirm such integral aspects of one another's being-in-the-world and because there is a focus on connection through similarity, otherness is not automatically something to protect oneself against and, therefore, is more easily met in openness as uniqueness. It seems that the larger the base of confirmation, the less threatening the experience of otherness, for two reasons--firstly, it is less likely to create distance and separation thereby severing the connection through the loss of the relating, and secondly, it is less likely to precipitate an inability to hold one's ground thereby severing the connection through the loss of distance.

The importance of the realm of the between in one's definition of self has been emphasized by existentialists and in the last decade, by feminists, in contrast to mainstream psychology. Miller (1984) argues that from Erikson (1950) to Levinson (1978), the development of self has been seen as a "process of separating oneself out from the matrix of others" usually through a series of painful crises. The emphasis has been on separation to the exclusion of relation. Furthermore, as Miller states:

> Much of the prevalent literature tends to suggest that because she is the same sex as the caretaker, the girl cannot develop an internal sense of self; that is, that boys develop a sense of self because they separate themselves from the female caretaker. First, it ignores all of the complexity of the interaction between caretaker and infant. It is as if there were no interaction because they are both of the same sex (1984, p. 4).

Miller, with others (e.g., Gilligan, 1982), goes on to suggest that women's experience

indicates that women find definition of themselves in interaction, in relationship, in the between. Miller also argues that while the prevailing models of development do not fit well with women's lived immersion in the world, neither do they bode well for men, as a large body of literature from both women and men, indicating that men lack a sense of community and have difficulty engaging in intimacy, suggests.

Women's bonding with women in traditional psychology has been characterized as "immature," denoting an undeveloped sense of self. However, if we take as our starting point the definition of self within the realm of the between, a two-pronged process of putting at a distance and relating to, women's bonding with women is seen in a different light. In the event that men are rarely available for the relating to component of this movement, infrequently offering a genuine possibility for mutual confirmation and the unfolding of the self in relation, women will value and embrace the confirmation they receive in their meeting with other women.

Morgan (1984) asserts that it can be acknowledged that there is an erotic element in all friendships. Certainly, sensuality was a thematic expression of these women's relationships with other women. They enjoyed watching, touching, and holding their women friends.

Within feminism, a definition of lesbianism has proved tricky. For many reasons there has been a tendency towards defining lesbianism as a political rather than a sexual choice. In this regard, Adrienne Rich's (1980) coining of the terms "lesbian existence" and "lesbian continuum" have been influential. Rich abstracts lesbianism from the realm of sexuality and redefines it in terms of female bonding and the female erotic which is described as the "energy. . .omnipresent in the 'sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic'" (1980, p. 650). Such a conceptualization of lesbianism apparently creates the conditions for a reconciliation of the feminist lesbian/heterosexual split. Certainly, the women participants in this exploration, in their sensual appreciation of other women, would find location on the "lesbian continuum." Yet, I tend to agree with Echols (1983) when she argues that such a definition does a disservice to both lesbian and heterosexual women and may ultimately serve to preserve suspicious relations. The notion of a "lesbian continuum" cloaks lesbian sexuality in invisibility. Furthermore, in its relation to what Rich terms women's "double-life," that is, the assumption that heterosexuality is

neither fully chosen nor pleasurable, the "lesbian continuum" assumes that female heterosexuality is more apparent than real, such that any display of affection between women is taken as evidence of preferred lesbianism. The attraction of heterosexuality is disregarded. It seems to me that ultimately, as feminists, we must find our way back to an appreciation of the unique in our diversity and within our similarities. Certainly, the complexity of our authentic humanness is inevitably bound to defy easy reduction of ourselves into definition. At this point theoretical feminism speaks little to women who enjoy their heterosexuality and yet also meet with women friends in sensual appreciation.

Rich (1980) has charged that heterosexual women typically lead a "double life." In support of her claims she observes that while women encounter men sexually, they go to women to meet their emotional needs. In fact, the majority of women in this study did confirm that observation. Especially earlier on in their relationships, or when they were at home with children, women spoke of desperately needing contact with other women, and of going to women for support and confirmation that was unavailable from their male partners. I think there has always hovered a fear in the women's movement that if women were to come to a genuine I-Thou meeting with men, they would abandon the women's cause. In this exploration, four women spoke of changing relationships with women as their relationships with their partners changed. Changes in partnership interactions can be seen as a moving out of the "double life" formerly experienced by these women and a moving into an authentic dialogue with their partners. This transformation was given voice in words such as these--"It may be that we have reached a point in our relationship where I consider him a true friend."

Coming to an I-Thou meeting with their partner, did affect these participants' relationships with their women friends. Specifically, they did not need to rely on women any longer for emotional confirmation and support. In contrast they felt their friendships with women to be more playful and their energy to be more available for women's movement work. There was certainly not an abandoning of women. It seems, in fact, that if women can create mutually nurturing, energy-giving, and life-providing relationships with men who provide sustenance and hope, then they may even have an increased energy to devote to their feminist commitment.

Finally, within this topic, the two older women spoke of the experience of being perceived as mentors by younger women in their work place. Any attribution of a pedestal label is generally a mixed experience. For Toni and Helen, being perceived as a mentor offered the twin movement of being set at a distance, such that an equal I-Thou meeting with their younger co-workers became difficult, but also of a moving into relation such that there was valuable confirmation of an important aspect of their becoming selves--that of being able to offer and represent something of value to other women.

Relationships with Men

Apart from their heterosexual partnership, the women in this exploration tended to have few, and in a couple of cases, no other friendships with men. In terms of their perceptions of Men as a class and the dominant male construction of reality, these women just did not want most men as friends. They saw their few friendships with men as consistent with their immersion in a patriarchal world. Thus, the conversationalists tended to approach unfamiliar men from their position as feminists, from within the distinctions drawn by feminism, such that men are regarded with some caution and perceived as Men (i.e., one of a class and therefore, possibly an enemy), unless they happen to distinguish themselves as otherwise, as human. In a sense these women, in their meeting of men, put them on trial.

The participants experienced some similar reactions from men. They commonly expressed feeling that men tended to be intimidated by them. In coming to know about their work and their being-in-the-world, men quickly labelled, dismissed, and avoided them as "feminist." Being around men typically meant encountering an I-It relation in the sexual realm also--having to put up with subtle "come-ons" and innuendos, sexist jokes, and sexual harassment.

In most women's experience men tend to approach us as an "It." While a person-to-person meeting is a mutually created engagement in the realm of the between, women have historically been responsible for taking care of the connecting aspect of that double distancing and relating movement. When women initiate openness and take full responsibility for creating connection, men do not have to. In ontological rebellion feminists currently tend to hold men at a distance and meet them with the "It-ness" of a

feminist class distinction. Most men, used to relying upon women to prompt them to dialogue and personhood, of course retreat into labelling, distancing, and dismissing these women. It takes courage on the part of a man today to meet a feminist in genuine openness and authentic revelation. It takes no less courage, however, on the part of a feminist, in her historical immersion in the world, to meet a man in the true vulnerability of dialogue. Such meeting always involves an assessment of effort and reward. For these women, with most men, the effort was seen to be too great and the rewards too little. Having few male friends tends to mirror the somewhat sad fact that on the whole men and women live entrenched in different worlds, different distinctions, and genuine meeting is rare.

However, these women are not without hope that genuine meeting is possible and ought to become more prevalent. There was no desire on the part of the participants to write men off completely. These women would support Deborah Gregory's (1983) assertion that "we do not have to assume that a penis is an infallible sign of stunted humanity. We can remain attuned to the possibilities, even when we declare war on the current realities" (p. 149). This is precisely the tension that these women appear to be living. They each had had at least some experience of an equal, loving and mutually giving relationship with a man and, therefore, articulated a belief in the possibility of change. At the same time, a fierce commitment to a rich expression of self made it unlikely that they would settle for much less in friendship with a man.

In contrast to their connection with other women, these participants tended to experience men as "other," conceptualized both as difference and uniqueness. Much of what might be said here in regard to the women's general experience of "otherness" has already been written in relation to the specific experience of "otherness" with their male partners. What I would like to add, is that while feminism eloquently addresses our experience of "otherness" as difference, and provides a construction of reality within which this is a sane, understandable, and fitting perception, it has little to say about the experience of "otherness" as uniqueness. It seems to me that some attention to the twin face, a face touching concepts such as curiosity and desire, which in turn imply freedom, would inevitably be an empowering celebration of women's agency in the world, our power to create.

Children

Morgan (1984) suggests that the proverbial Wordsworth line, "The Child is father of the Man" might have been more accurately stated as "The Child is mother of the Woman." Typically it is women who are engaged in the raising of children such that "having a child drastically changes the lives of most women, opening up previously unimaginable new selves, new areas of responsibility, delight, exhaustion, anxiety, ambivalence and physiological change" (Morgan, 1984, p. 223). Having a child and living with her in genuine dialogue can impact parents significantly. Being with children openly recalls our childhood, connects us with long forgotten aspects of our self and thereby holds the potential to transform our horizons and bring new richness to our becoming.

Being feminist impacted the experience of motherhood for the four participants who had children. As with sexuality, feminism impacted their experience in different ways, according to their individual situations in the world. Commonly, however, being feminist meant attempting to be with children not just as a category "mother," but in the fullness of one's being. This was expressed in different ways, for example, by having children use the mother's first name, by continuing paid employment during motherhood, by allowing children to see one's joy, fear, anger, and sadness. These women fought reduction to the role of mother and, through the experience of motherhood, attempted to continue to define themselves in their richness.

Inevitably this brought some conflict. The participants experienced some guilt at not being fulfilled by the birth of their children (as social mythology suggested would be the case), and by their eagerness to re-enter the paid workforce. This was especially true of the two older participants who had their children prior to the popularization of Betty Friedan's, The Feminine Mystique, initially published in 1963. Their feelings brought a sense of difference from the other women they knew, and some fear that something might be wrong with them. On the other hand, the two women who had had their children in the last fifteen years appeared to experience much less guilt and sense of difference at soon returning to work.

However, there was a common expression of conflict around being at work and not always being at home for the children--a wanting to be two places at once. This can be appreciated in light of Gilligan's (1982) and Miller's (1984) work which suggests that

women's sense of self and morality revolves around issues of connection with, responsibility for, and care of, other people. When the nurturing of oneself distances a woman from the nurturing of a close other, even a little, some conflict is likely to be experienced (e.g., Miller, 1984).

Morgan (1984) argues that with women, children are a powerless and objectified group in society. She speaks of the mask or stereotype of childhood within which the humanity of children is trivialized and dismissed. With Friedman (1983) she notes that children are quite at the mercy of "significant others," totally dependent upon being called into existence as persons. In their emergence of self they need confirmation in their interactions with their caretaker. To reduce a child to the category "child" thereby denying her uniqueness, her individual becoming, is to limit confirmation which tends to be conditional in the best of circumstances. It seems to me that, in relating to one's children primarily from the position of "mother," one is more likely to require them to fit the category "child," thus facilitating an I-It relation. These women, and perhaps feminist women generally, in refusing to be reduced to "mother," may be allowing more of an I-Thou relation with their children, providing rich confirmation of their uniqueness and allowing them their personhood even as they are children.

Such a speculation receives some credence from these women's expression of confirming, for example, gentleness and emotionality in their sons, assertiveness and independence in their daughters--especially as there was no indication that this was happening within a context of nonconfirmation of the more traditional balance of energy and agency in boys and vulnerability and nurturing in girls. Certainly there is always the risk for feminists of creating an alternate feminist I-It relationship in which confirmation is conditional upon a new set of values as opposed to supporting the uniqueness of a young person.

Each of these mothers spoke of deliberately attempting to eliminate sexism from their childrearing practices, and of framing the everyday experiences of their growing children within a feminist framework. Thus, there was a sense of parenting as a very reflective process in which participants learned as much if not more than their children. Morgan says, "As a parent trying to communicate new and more humane values to a child, one perhaps learns even more than the child (1984, p. 216).

Feminists have often been charged with brainwashing their children with feminist propoganda. Yet every feminist knows that there is no such thing as a value-free knowledge, reality, or interaction. We know that every child is being programmed with sexist propaganda each minute of every day, just in their very being in this world. In answer to this charge, Morgan says:

> The risks and labor one faces for the sake of one's beliefs as an adult are one's own choice; it sometimes seems manipulative to "lay them on" one's child or children. Yet if we don't fight for the right of our (and in fact all) children to see the world without androcentric blinders "laid on" them, affixed by Man and Woman, then who will? (1984, p. 216).

When the women in this study speak of their interactions with their children I have a sense of "multilingual" children--children learning to speak more than one language and see more than one reality. I certainly get a sense of some very articulate children. Ultimately, they will decide which language they prefer. Yet being bilingual in a predominantly monolingual community can cause difficulties. These mothers spoke of their children experiencing them as different from other mothers. The women also spoke of seeing their children as different from other children. These are children who will probably learn early about otherness, about connecting and distancing, uniqueness and difference. Robin Morgan (1984), in speaking of her own experience, closely echoes the articulations of these conversationalists:

> Yes, there are tears sometimes, and not only Blake's, but Kenneth's and mine, too. When your child is ridiculed by his peers for his politics, for playing with dolls as well as playing baseball (and demanding that girls be permitted on the team), for loving music and poetry. . .when he cries about certain received insults and cuts and ostracisms, then all you can do is comfort him, support him, remind him of his friends who respect and share his views, reiterate that one can't take a stand on everything all the time and be as certain as you can that his principles are his own and not held for your approval--this last made clear by lots of plain loving, no matter what. It doesn't hurt for him to see you cry when some adults do the same things to you, for that matter. . . .All of which have the effect of freeing the parent into personhood--and of

respectfully granting the child more power as a human being (p. 217).

In the theme, children as anchors, one woman, Maria, speaks of experiencing her children as something of a lifeline, a focus around which to muster her strength, a reason for courage in coming to leave a violent marriage. This is a theme which has received some mention in feminist literature and which is frequently evident in therapy with battered women. When a woman, with few material and emotional resources, decides to leave an abusive partnership, I would speculate that her children are essential in her definition of self in that they can provide her with some confirmation and with some relating and connecting. Frequently they may be the only sources as battered women are typically very isolated. Also children, in their youth, and in our wanting something better for them, can touch the richness of our potential and yield the possibility of our becoming. Such a context provides one suggestion for the appreciation of this theme.

Coming to Consensus: the dance

> Every human being, whether child or adult, seems to require *significance*, that is, *place in another persons world*. Adults and children seek "position" in the eyes of others, a position that offers room to move. . . .Most people at some time in their lives seek the experience, whether or not they have found it in early life, of occupying *first* place, if not the only significant place, in at least one other person's world (Laing, 1971, p. 136).

In the coming together of two individuals in relationship, there is inevitably the striving for an I-Thou meeting in a world which commonly offers little more than I-It contact. Moving into relationship represents an attempt to co-create dialogue or consensus, to establish ways to agree and disagree that allow for the conservation both of the individual person and of the partnership, the realm of the between. Thus, to use Maturana's (1984) words, initially infinite possibilities of interaction become co-ordinated around sequences of distinctions conditional to the conservation of the partnership. That is, a couple represents a closed domain in which there is the generation of a pattern or dance of reciprocal interactions, representing "operations in accord," in agreement, the goal of which is the continuing production of the components, the preservation of the coupling. A perturbation (i.e., external information with which the system comes into

contact) may have impact structurally, thereby changing the system's consensual distinctions, or it may have impact organizationally, thereby precipitating disintegration of the system.

In looking at the recurrent partnership conduct, the realm of between engaged in by these conversationalists, three patterns were distinguished. In the first, which was called the 60/40 Rhythm, women saw themselves as holding the majority of the power and most often initiating change. Typically, a specification of nonconsensus and the desire for consensus was precipitated by the woman. Most often a coming to consensus entailed the movement of the man to the woman's position. That is, she unequivocably held to her distinctions and he relinquished his distinctions and in turn adopted hers. Throughout the articulation of these women's realm of togetherness there is a sense of the two-fold movement of distancing and relating as being split between, rather than encompassed by both partners. The woman sets her conditions and holds her ground; the man steps out of himself and moves to meet, to connect with the woman.

This pattern might be seen as a reversal of traditional female-male partnerships and, in fact, critics of feminism have often accused feminists of merely wanting a reversal of roles and power. However, the experiences of these women would refute that claim. The two women for whom this pattern characterized being-in-partnership, expressed the most dissatisfaction and boredom in their relationships. In fact, the situation of both these conversationalists might be seen as the transformation of an initial solution into a problem. They initially chose their relationships as a solution to their feelings of insecurity and fragility in the world. Coupling with their partner promised the possibility and, in fact, the realization of change for them, the self-in-becoming. Jean and Maria's current lack of fulfillment in their relationships can be seen to arise from the inflexibility of mutually created distinctions, such that the women no longer feel a confirmation of their becoming within this context. Thus, mere role reversal appears to be an unsatisfactory alternate because it offers insufficient personal challenge, little pull of the self towards its unique unfolding.

Without the dual movement of distancing and relating on the part of both persons, a relationship cannot be said to be a meeting of an I and a Thou. Such a relationship requires a trust that the other will respond in their authenticity, that is, responsibly. This

requires an allowing of the other's uniqueness and an acceptance that the other cannot be controlled. In fact, Jean and Maria both felt that they had some control over their partners; that is, they know that they can generally persuade them to compliance with their wishes even if this sometimes necessitates rather dramatic expression. In Buber's sense this represents monologue rather than dialogue. At the same time, in Maturana's sense, this is consensus, reciprocity in accord.

Maturana (1983) suggests that we need to talk when we are not in consensuality. Similarly, Friedman (1983) says that dialogue may be silent. According to Maturana, when we are in consensuality our conducts are perfectly congruent, such that we communicate--there is no need of effort, of talk. The consensual basis for this pattern is that the men will agree with the women. When that does not happen there is a verbal interchange during which these grounds of consensus are typically re-established. Within such a pattern it follows that the men would rarely initiate change and that the women, in holding firmly to their distinctions, would feel they learn't little from verbal interchange with their partners. Similarly, on the rare occasion that change was requested by the male, discussion would be more likely to entrench the lines of disagreement than to bring forth accord. In fact, such is the recurrency of this realm of the between. For example, this is illustrated in Jean's telling of Mike's request that she alter her arguing style which he saw as dogmatic and aggressive. In any discussion of the issue Jean held to her perceptions and claimed not to understand what he was speaking about. When one day she did suddenly understand what he was saying, she experienced the process of her insight as somewhat mysterious, but having little to do with any verbal persuasion on Mike's part.

Such an experience fits with Maturana's (1983) comments that when we talk without consensus and yet claim that we are making an effort to understand or agree, we are generally speaking from within our distinctions, and so long as we continue to speak only from within our distinctions and do not open ourselves to the possible transformation of our individual horizons, we can never come to agreement. We are engaged in individual soliliquies rather than dialogue.

Coupling inevitably gives rise to a consensual domain, a sphere of recurrent interactions essential to the continued recreation of the coupling. Yet the realm of the between requires what Maturana has called a "mutual stickiness" (i.e., curiosity and desire,

an appreciation of otherness as uniqueness) that will draw two persons together. Otherwise they will push apart and when little consensuality can be reached they will separate. It is in these terms that Jean's separation from Mike can be viewed. Jean grew to want change in their patterns of interaction, and in their inability together to create a new dance of consensual, reciprocal interactions, the couple separated. To put it differently, perturbation resulted in organizational disintegration. The separation might also be couched in terms of Jean's feeling that she was receiving insufficient confirmation of herself, restricted in the unfolding of her becoming self.

The 50/50 Rhythm, which was currently the predominant pattern for four of the seven participants, represents more closely person meeting person, an I-Thou dialogue. The process of coming to agreement, articulated by these women, represents a co-creation of consensus. Both persons mutually meet the other in openness while at the same time holding their ground. Thus, there is a flexibility of distinctions such that moving into accord transforms individual horizons. There is more harmony apparent in this pattern of coupling than in the other two patterns. The realm of consensus appears to be broader and there is expression of an easy rhythm of togetherness. Little effort is required in recurrent interaction. There is an openness to the other's uniqueness, a trust that the other will respond in genuine authenticity such that there is no sense of one partner controlling the other partner. A mutual expansiveness as opposed to restriction is implied. The difference between this pattern and the former pattern is the difference between dialogue and monologue. These are the women who spoke of a "soul sisterhood" connection with their male partners, the silent communion of genuine dialogue.

Maturana's sense of a mutual stickiness that draws partners together is apparent in the expression of this pattern's recurrency. The fundamental motivation in this realm of the between is towards the mutual creation of consensus. Accordingly, a verbal interchange between these couples holds the possibility of creating consensus as opposed to merely entrenching individual distinctions. When there is a flexibility in personal distinctions and an openness to the world of the other, there is dialogue and with dialogue there can be accord.

A sense of flexibility is evident throughout the agreeing and disagreeing that occurs within this mode of structural coupling. The impact of perturbation tends to be

absorbed structurally such that the system's consensual distinctions remain fluid. Maturana's notion of an organizationally closed but structurally dynamic interactional system is clearly apparent within the confines of this pattern. It would seem that the more dynamic the system, the more plastic its consensual distinctions and the less fragile its organization. In comparison to the 50/50 rhythm, the 60/40 rhythm comprises distinction rigidity such that a perturbation appears more likely to impact organizationally rather than structurally and precipitate disintegration of the system, separation of the couple. In Maturana's words, the more complex an entity, the more opportunity for varied structural coupling and, of course, for plasticity in the drawing of distinctions. It seems to me that this has to do with the expression and realization of one's richness, in Friedman's language. The more varied one's definition (i.e., in terms of identity as feminist, woman, lover, friend, person, etc.), the more composite one's distinctions in the world. Potentially then, in an intimate partnership one might create a coupling that takes into account the richness of one's expression in the world, one's varied identities, rather than creating a recurrent coupling within which one might interact only in terms of a very limited set of distinctions or identities. In essence, this distinction relates to Buber's I-Thou/I-It distinction. Also, an interactionally dynamic system, which comprises plastic distinctions and a multiple-identity coupling seems to me to be akin to the notion of confirmation, to speak to the potential of the becoming self, a possibility that was most apparent within the 50/50 rhythm.

The 40/60 rhythm is similar to that discussed in the first instance except it highlights the complementary position in the dance. At the time of the conversation this pattern described the being together of one couple, Manon and Alain. Manon spoke of feeling that she had less power or control in their recurrent interactions than Alain. Put differently, she expresses a sense of giving up her ground, losing her truth in meeting Alain. The pattern's fundamental agreement is that he will hold his ground, his distance and that she will be responsible for the connecting, for moving to his position.

Yet this pattern does differ from the 60/40 rhythm in the sense that the woman has not abandoned her agency. In the first pattern there is little feeling of the man, the partner with less power, ever acting with much agency or initiative. He seems infinitely malleable and acquiescent. Within this coupling the woman will initiate change and struggle

to hold her ground. There is a sense that she feels her grasp of her ground somewhat fragile so that at times she is bravely stubborn and immuteable. Consequently, this pattern is characterized by some intense and frequent arguing. This is a pattern also which holds the possibility of transforming into either of the other two sequences of interaction. It certainly appears less entrenched than the 60 / 40 rhythm.

When this couple is not talking they move in consensus and generally enjoy each other. When they step into a verbal mode of being together, the realm of ideas, they tend to hold to their individual distinctions, attempting to persuade the other to their perspective such that they become entrenched in a verbal tug of war which may continue to flare up, off and on, over a number of years. At times, in order to bring some harmony, the partner with least power, in this case Manon, will relinquish her distinctions and move to an adoption of Alain's distinctions (although she may just as well move back to her former position at a future point). Alain, however, is never verbally persuaded to Manon's point of view by way of her arguments. Nevertheless, he does at times come to change his point of view in the creation of consensus.

This process occurs, however, outside their competitive verbal interchange and appears to come about when Manon persists in her position and the possibility of organizational disintegration, the couple separating, begins to hover. Thus, structural change is required to maintain organization. At these times Alain will alter his usual tactic of maintaining distance or holding his ground, and will enter the movement of relating, taking a step towards Manon. However, this will not occur through him merely abandoning his distinctions and adopting hers. Rather, he holds his ground by initiating or taking responsibility for the changes in distinction he decides upon. Furthermore, this occurs through interaction with information that is external to their system, and moves outside the lines of their verbal disagreement. So, for example, he will go out and explore pornography on his own initiative and subsequently come to his own conclusions, which will be approximately, but not exactly in accord with those of Manon. Thus, at times Alain's altering of distinctions is perceived as surprising and mysterious by Manon. She does not really know how it came about but she has an inkling that it had little to do with her arguments. In Maturana's language, one would say that external information prompted a perturbation of structure allowing for the continuation rather than disintegration of the

system. An external perturbation is the only hope for consensus when two people are arguing from within their inflexible, individual distinctions.

To briefly look at these patterns in the light of Gilligan's (1982) findings, one would conclude that the 40/60 rhythm most closely approximates traditional heterosexual coupling, the predominant movement of the woman being to move into relating, the predominant movement of the man being to hold his distance. Of course, the 60/40 rhythm finds the reversal of the traditional relationship with the women experimenting with holding their ground and the men being largely responsible for creating the connection, moving into meeting. It is in the 50/50 rhythm that we find both partners most consistently capable of the dual movement of distancing and relating. It is also this pattern of interaction which appears to hold the most possibility for personal fulfillment.

Being Feminist and Heterosexual

In discussing what it meant for them to be feminist and heterosexual, each woman in this exploration expressed a sense of the combination being difficult but not impossible. While they experienced their own relationships as a coupling in which the joy outweighed the struggles, they felt that on the whole, for most women, it is not currently easy to be a feminist and have a fulfilling heterosexual relationship--and sometimes it was difficult for them, personally, both in relation to their partners and in relation to the feminist community. Their words reflect their attempt to come to an I-Thou meeting with a man in a patriarchal context. They speak to the desire to hold one's own ground, one's truth and yet open to the authenticity of another, the "other," within a predominantly male constructed world. A feminist analysis gives a new language and context within which to view the fear that inevitably accompanies meeting otherness in openness. Accordingly, it is bound to alter the experience. However, it also offers women the possibility of balancing their tendency towards connecting and relating, with the alternate movement of distance, keeping touch with one's own centre. In the coming together of feminism and heterosexuality and the rich tension between the two, the dual movement of the realm of the between, distancing and relating, receive pungent illumination.

Being in a relationship with a man within an immersion in patriarchy receives varied comment depending upon your position in the world. The women of this study did not feel

that they were in relationships that compromised their feminism or their personal integrity in any way. They speak of co-creating with their male partners, a mutual experiencing of confirmation and trust that stands in relief against the background of Men as a class of oppressors. They conclude, on the grounds of their experiencing that the possibility for emotional caring is not gender based.

To be a feminist and to live intimately with a man requires a fluidity of distinctions or the drawing of alternate distinctions that collapse an either / or situation. One could not possibly be a feminist and heterosexual if one was to hold unequivocably to the maxim of Man is Enemy. It is simply impossible to open to one's enemy. Many of these participants spoke of moving back and forth between a social and a personal lens--"You can't always just look at social categories, a political analysis, sometimes you have to look at individual relationships, a woman's personal situation and experience." Consequently, these women portrayed a willingness to punctuate their political analysis, with distinctions of a different kind, distinctions that had to do with the personal and the experiential. As their personal experience did not always fit easily into aspects of feminist theory, and as they were unwilling to deny the authenticity of their experience, these women lived a fluid dynamic of multiple distinctions which resolved their apparent contradiction in the rich fabric of their being-in-the-world.

To hold consistently to a Man is Enemy distinction locates a feminist heterosexuality at best as a contradiction and at worst as a defection. Many of the conversationalists in this exploration had felt the spoken judgement or unspoken nuance of the "political incorrectness" of their sexual choice under the feminist umbrella. They felt that their heterosexuality had on occasion called to question their commitment to feminism, sometimes for themselves and sometimes for other women. Echols (1983) suggests that heterosexuality is dismissed as an authentic sexual choice in two ways by feminism. Firstly, lesbianism has been established as the true measure of commitment to feminism, thereby giving "the personal is political" a prescriptive rather than descriptive meaning. Secondly, heterosexuality is assumed to be always imposed, propagandized, and coerced, such that it can be neither fully chosen nor pleasurable, and any display of affection between women is taken as their incubating lesbianism.

The prescription of either homosexuality or heterosexuality inevitably interferes with a genuine unfolding of the self, and represents what Morgan (1984) has called "sexual fundamentalism." Advocacy of lesbianism as the "politically correct" sexual choice is not surprising in view of the very real pain many women have suffered at the hands of the patriarchy. On many levels it simply "makes sense" to totally separate from men. Morgan suggests that the sexual fundamentalist tendency in feminism is related to despair of change, and certainly for many of us, despair about changing the situation hovers just the other side of bringing forth an awareness of what, for us, is. Morgan says:

> The *institution of heterosexuality* which demands conformity is indeed evil; it has suppressed joy and murdered minds and bodies. It is a state in the heart of sexual passion. An *institution of homosexuality* demanding conformity would be, a twin stake in the same heart. Because both homophobia and heterophobia are, simply, sexual-fundamentalist reductions of curiosity and desire (p. 145).

Advocacy of lesbianism as feminism's "politically correct" sexual choice has, I think, sparked a valuable examination of heterosexual women's homophobia. However, sexual fundamentalism in any form inevitably has to do with the separation of feeling from sexuality. Accordingly, to insist upon their combination is to insist upon personal choice, integrity of the self, and individual uniqueness.

Conclusions

This exploration was formally born in the realm of the between with a hermeneutic dialogue between the writer and seven conversationalists. It meandered in varied perturbations through the realm of the between weaving together different themes and languages in a sequence of snapshots of that sphere. Inevitably, it ends where it began, in the realm of the between, and yet, not quite, because it is a beginning with a different face because of the story in between. And on another level in the between, you, the reader bring me, the writer to presence in your recreation of the story. We are immeasureably immersed in betweenness.

Betweenness implies interaction. It suggests movement and movement always holds the possibility of transformation, of change. In fact, change is precisely what the feminist movement is concerned with, the ultimate transformation of interactions between

women and men. This discourse cuts into one corner of the vast sphere of betweenness. It explores the coming together, the confluence of feminism and heterosexuality, what it is like to be a feminist and yet to share one's daily being-in-the-world with a man, who is at one and the same time your lover and a member of the patriarchy.

As feminists we have created our version of reality, a picture of the way things are that fits with our experience, allows us our personal expression, and draws lines of distinction that contrast vividly with those drawn by the patriarchy, Men. In order to bring forth our vision of the world we have had to separate from men, talk together, and create a new consensus. As feminists, we have had first hand experience with the theory of radical constructivism.

In the intimate coming together of two people over time, that is, in any committed relationship, one comes face to face with the complexity of otherness. The realm of the between is a dynamic participatory universe within which our confrontation and confirmation of otherness becomes patterned into a distancing and relating engagement with our partner. It is in the realm of the between, in the meeting of the other, that we meet and become ourself. Furthermore, it is at the realm of the between, on both political and personal levels, in anguish at Man's reduction of Woman to It-ness, that feminism is aimed. It is also in its desire for Thou-ness, for personhood for women, that feminism doubts the possibility of richly fulfilling heterosexual relationships within the current climate of patriarchy.

The meeting of any two people in intimate interaction inevitably has many elements in common. In the coupling of a feminist with her male partner the shadows of Man and Woman irrevocably intrude and alter the parameters of their experiencing. The feminist heterosexual relationship holds uniquely in tension the creatively opposing movements of the realm of the between. There is, in pregnant tapestry, the tension between what is (oppressor / oppressed) and what might be (an equal union). There is, in rhythmic cadence, the tension between holding one's truth, one's ground, and moving in openness to meet another. There is, in muted clamour, the tension between personal expression and community confirmation.

In traditional heterosexual relationships, these tensions are not held but rather are collapsed, for women, on the side of what is, in an abandonment of one's truth and in the

realization of neither personal expression nor community confirmation. Morgan (1984) tells us that the Chinese word *mang* describes (among its other meanings) a legendary species of bird with a single eye and a single wing. Two of these birds, when united, are able to see clearly and to fly. As she says, it is an undeniably lyrical image and one of barely hoped for possibility. However, in an image of current male / female relations, we would have "one half-bird disappearing, subsumed into the other half bird--which in turn blithely flaps about declaring that it can see and fly" (p. 173).

Yet, that is not unequivocably the case. The present exploration suggests the resurrection to agency of the invisible half bird. It speaks of some feminist-heterosexual relationships in which the realm of the between is one where person meets person, where there is a dialogue of genuine authenticity, where there is the co-creation of consensus. It draws a picture of coming together in mutual confirmation and equality, albeit within the backdrop of patriarchy. It suggests the continued tension of two-ness, rather than the subsumption of the one, in the creation of the we.

Typically, we orient towards one side of tension, that of stress and conflict, and do not see the other face, that of rich possibility. To be feminist and heterosexual is to stand at the confluence of many currents of tension, which can only be reconciled in a rich expression and becoming of the self that will not yield to the reduction of categorization. Currently, feminist theory cannot account for the largely positive experiences of these seven heterosexual, feminist conversationalists. This prompts a reflection on the relationship between ideology and experience. Ideology, that is, a set of consensual distinctions, is crucial for feminists. It arises from acknowledging experience and so provides a filter through which to see and name the invisible. It is an essential tool for reflection and action. However, without a constant interplay with experience, ideology harbours the tendency to become reified, to assert the ideal as more real than experienced reality. In so doing it is impatient for resolution, uninterested in unanswered questions, intuitions, and barely grasped insights. When the radical becomes correct, it becomes conservative. The politically correct comes to resemble what it attempts to change. When a radical reconstruction of reality becomes reified as the truth, it abandons its goal of expansiveness, choice, and change and becomes reductive and prescriptive.

Some people have claimed that a respectable feminist cannot be married. Once

> it was held that a respectable woman had to be married. Phooey to both stereotypes, I say. The Feminist Movement has always been about more options, not less, for us all--in personal human relations as well as in every other area (Morgan, 1984, p. 165).

Feminism, in the generation of an alternate reality focused on women's oppression. It has yielded a coherent analysis of the victimization of women and of the dangers of our being-in-the-world under patriarchy. Yet an unwavering focus on the hazards of our existence can tend to obscure our agency in the world, the possibilities of women to create our personal as well as our political reality. There is no denying that women are an oppressed class under patriarchy. However, there is little room within the strictures of feminist theory to speak about and celebrate the pleasures of our being-in-the-world, our curiosity and creativity, our agency and our power. To ignore our alternate face is to risk again a recreation of ourselves as dependent and enfeebled, a reaffirmation of male vice and female virtue in a newly conservative entrenchment of gender differences, and a lived expression of "no" to the world without the joy of "yes." In conclusion and in speculation about the rich possibilities for our unique and becoming selves, I offer a final image:

> Indra's Net is a metaphor used in Mahayana Buddhism for the interpenetration of all things in the cosmos. . .a net, stretching endlessly through the universe, the vertical strands spanning time, the horizontal ones running through space. Strung along the net are lucent beads, each irradiated by the light of existence, and each reflecting that light from every other bead in the vast network. Each bead is therefore not only itself but is every other bead, in that it is *involved* with every other bead. This involvement is active, dynamic, continuous--a dance or hum or buzz so pervasive that it can even appear as stillness, the way that the "restlessness" of subatomic particles reacting to confinement can appear passive when unrelativistically viewed in an inert object like a stone or a chair. Or a marriage. So infinite can the movement be, in fact, that motion and rest become reconciled as the same thing.
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> Each bead of sensation is, in effect, a holograph through which the light of communication has streamed, illuminating the dimensions of that

particular bead with the all-dimensional energy of boundless communication. . .

To live this way would be to intensify the holograph's colors, through curiosity and desire, to a point where they would be equal to its depth--palpable, vivid, confidently sensual. Such colors in *depth* and not on a flat canvas would be like colors color-blind Man and Woman have never imagined, colors possible only between individuals who know each other deeply enough to know that they are strangers and, at an even higher magnification, eternally and exquisitely--mystery, glory and wonder--that they are the same (Morgan, 1984, pp. 183-184).

VI. Epilogue: reflections from this side of the hermeneutical encounter

Curiosity is rarely encouraged beyond the limits of childhood. To be allowed to live in the world from a genuine position of not-knowing, to in fact be wonder-full and explore the creation and re-creation of our reality without the strictures of societal consensus (right and wrong), prompts the joy of nostalgic reminiscence and the fear of person-all chaos. Thus, we do our best to confine authentic curiosity to our children. As adults we are supposed to know, or at least act as if we know. And, in fact, most of the time we feel as if we do know. Knowing requires leaving behind curiosity, ignoring the dusty sideroads and walking within the shoulders of nicely paved, well entrenched consensual distinctions--after all, curiosity did, apparently, kill the cat.

Curiosity has had little part to play in standard scientific research. Where is the curiosity in an endeavour which holds as its first goal the support of hypotheses? Genuine curiosity has to do with the transformation of distinctions rather than ever more refined operation within a set of distinctions. In adulthood it is more the mode of artists (who are often seen as child-like) than of scientists. Therefore, in my way, I have attempted to return curiosity to this research exploration.

The hermeneutical encounter implies an intrinsic element of curiosity. It involves coming with a question, a not knowing. Yet, while the question is addressed to another, a "thou" in her uniqueness, in a deeper sense the other in turn questions her questioner, in her uniqueness. The fabric is dialogue, a meeting of the between that creates a mutual transformation of personal horizons. Some testimony of the impact of the hermeneutical engagement for the conversationalists was given in Chapter III. The current chapter touches the question of where my curiosity led me. It completes the hermeneutical picture and offers some reflection upon my experience with the process from this side of the circle.

To come to a research exploration with a genuine curiosity is to risk one's personal distinctions in the world. When the question springs from the lived experience of one's current being-in-the-world, the risk feels even greater. The question of what it means to be feminist and to live intimately with a man arose, of course, from the depths of my personal experience. It arose within the context of what I called, in my autobiographical reflection, The Edge of a Crevasse--He Totters--She Totters. For me,

this was a time of intense confusion and some despair. The combination of feminism and heterosexuality had become an uneasy one and the two commitments were beginning to feel as if they embodied irreconcilable distinctions. On the whole, I experienced maleness suspiciously, an unequivocable perception of difference that allowed for little appreciation of the unique. Inevitably, I was curious about other feminists' committed and intimate relationships with men. How did they do it? What was it like for them? Was it in fact possible? Certainly, feminist theory suggested that it most likely was not possible at this time, and if I then held a bias towards one direction or the other, it was probably towards the impossibility of the combination. The solution to my dilemma appeared to be either the abandonment of my feminism or an abandonment of my attraction for men, neither of which seemed very fulfilling. Being somewhat greedy, I felt there must be a way to satisfy both desires, although I could not yet see how. This, then, was the context of not knowing from which I embarked upon this exploration.

Almost three years later I stand differently on the same ground, some of this difference inevitably having to do with my immersion in this discourse. Much of what has happened in between is difficult to articulate. However, some of it has to do with drawing new distinctions, with allowing a flexibility of distinction, with finding a new language to bring to words half spoken experience and with reaffirming a commitment to my personal knowledge and expression in the world. I am still a feminist. I still live with the same man. And I've come to enjoy them both. The combination has transformed to a lively I-Thou meeting, allowing for both the confrontation and confirmation of our mutual uniqueness.

In many ways I am a coward. When my experiencing finds little articulation in the world, especially in a world which provides me with essential confirmation, I have rarely had the courage to assert the "truth" of my experiencing. What this exploration gave to me, was essentially an opportunity to speak with other women who shared some similar experiences to me, but whose experiencing had been given little forum for voice. Speaking with these women brought the words (distinctions) for me with which to describe, acknowledge, and value my being-in-the-world. The conversations inevitably prompted intricate reflection and the searching for a language that might best bring them to life and fit their richness. This led me to hermeneutics, to Maturana and to Buber and Friedman. I've come away from my interaction with these theorists with a clearer

appreciation of the notion that in any given moment each one of us is behaving "perfectly"--that is, in accord with the dictates of our structure, our history, and our experience in the world. In any situation we do the best we can. Such a distinction not only allows me appreciation of other's uniqueness, it also gives me more courage to be, to nurture and trust my personal expression in the world.

The dissertation process has also triggered a reflection of and change in my conceptualization of responsibility. The other side of behaving "perfectly" at any given time is our responsibility for our perceptions and our reactions. In an "objective" world we can contribute blame to "objective" circumstances. In a constructivist world we carry the "burdensome gift" of choosing our reality. I like Friedman's words: "Responsibility means to respond, and genuine response is the response of the whole person. In every situation we are asked to respond in a unique way. . .this means we must have that courage to address and that courage to respond which rests on, embodies, and makes manifest existential trust" (1983, p. 40). To be creative in the world is necessarily to be responsible in the world. This speaks to the intrinsic agency and creative resources of the individual, to the budding of a many-textured definition, expansion, and becoming that is our possibility.

I would like, also, to say something about anger. I know that some of the differences between where this exploration started and where it finished for me, has something to do with the expression of my anger. I would say that it is impossible to adopt a feminist construction of reality and not get very angry. When the world is viewed in terms of feminist distinctions there is a reason in every nuance for outrage. It is neither very easy nor very pleasant to live with feeling predominantly angry. Yet anger has been the primary driving energy behind feminism and I suspect, all non-spiritual attempts at revolution. Some time ago I began to see that maintaining my anger was my protection, my shield in this world. Being angry provided me the comfort of feeling self righteous and throwing barbs. To transform my anger would be to invite peace and forgiveness, removing my protection and opening me to the other--a horrifying thought, full of risk and the possibility of hurt. For me, confronting and transforming my anger was a process initially filled with fear, yet it was a process that yielded rich rewards, and a process in which immersion in this discourse played a part. As a result I am less mean to men. Perhaps, in some people's eyes, that will make me less of a feminist. However, I am also

much less mean to myself. I feel less victimized and more creative, less danger and more pleasure, less restriction and more expansion. Sometimes I feel there is an unspoken correlating in feminism between the more angry, the more radical. I now believe our energy must encompass more varied expression if we truly want the changes we say we want.

I have lived and do live in the world at the juncture of many varied distinctions. The togetherness of some, at times, seem a rather unusual blend. My life has frequently turned an unexpected (for others and for myself) corner in the road. I have come to see this less as a difficulty and more as a commitment to the expression of my uniqueness.

To return curiosity not only to life in general but to a research exploration in particular has entirely changed the nature of this engagement for me. Creating this discourse, this story happened on the whole, without effort, without much "doing," and with a lot of ease and a lot of fun. Not only the conversations, but also the writing occurred within a context of "not knowing." Writing this dissertation has been a vivid demonstration of a further aspect of the hermeneutical for me. Most often I would put pen to paper without knowing what I wanted to say. Like speaking, writing with curiosity immerses one in a dialogue such that writing represents a "coming to know." Frequently my writing surprised me. I had written something before I knew I knew it; the expression of an idea on paper was most often my first awareness of that idea. There is a flow in such writing that has little to do with the separation of thinking then writing. In contrast, there is a bringing forth to consciousness that is replete with surprises. Many times the process has reminded me of Mary Daly's words in her reclamation of the term "Spinster" as a "woman whose occupation is to spin." She says:

> There is no reason to limit the meaning of this rich and cosmic verb. A woman whose occupation is to spin participates in the whirling movement of creation. She who has chosen her Self, who defines her Self, by choice, neither in relation to children, nor to men, who is self-identified, is a Spinster, a whirling dervish, spinning in new time/space (1978, p. 4).

I know I will never pursue a traditionally academic research task and writing again. The opportunity to spin this dissertation a little differently, within the context of a genuine curiosity has ensured that. Personally, I think a little interweaving of responsible curiosity

would enhance the web of psychology.

To abandon a belief in objectivity is to lose certainty. It is to lose the comfort and confinement of knowing, to let go of the pleasant box and wrappings of consensual distinctions. On the other hand, it is to return to a fundamental not-knowing, to embrace again the element of curiosity. With a lack of certainty there is a freshness in this very moment. Curiosity brings aliveness, the movement of distinctions, a living and dynamic recurrency that holds the possibility for change. And this is a planet sorely in need of change.

In tribute to curiosity and the not-knowing, the aliveneness it entails, I cannot resist leaving this exploration with one of my favourite stories:

> While sitting on the banks of the P'u River, Chuang-tse was approached by two representatives of the Prince of Ch'u, who offered him a position at court. Chuang-tse watched the water flowing by as if he had not heard. Finally, he remarked, "I am told that the Prince has a sacred tortoise, over two thousand years old, which is kept in a box, wrapped in silk and brocade." "That is true," the officials replied. "If the tortoise had been given a choice," Chuang-tse continued, "which do you think he would have liked better--to have been alive in the mud, or dead within the palace?" "To have been alive in the mud, of course," the men answered. "I too prefer the mud," said Chuang-tse.
>
> (from The Tao of Pooh: Benjamin Hoff, 1982, p. 41).

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Appendix A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I, _____ voluntarily consent to participate in an interview with Heather Bain, a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta. The purpose of the study has been explained to me, and I understand that the information given by me will be used solely for research purposes and published in the form of a thesis or otherwise. I further understand that every effort will be made to remove all identifying information. I agree to allow the interview to be tape recorded with the understanding that the tapes will be erased when the research project is complete.

Date _____ Signed _____

Witness _____

Appendix B

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Place of Birth:

Nationality:

Ethnic Background:

Religion:

Financial Resources:

Residential History:

Educational History:

Occupational History:

Feminist History: (organizational membership / activities / volunteer work)

About how long have you been a feminist?

About how long have you been a radical feminist?

Marital / partnership status:

single( )	married( )	separated( )
divorced( )	widowed( )	remarried( )
cohabiting( )		other( )

How long have you been involved in your current partnership?

Shared residential history (do / did you live together? for how long?)

Children: (sex, age, residence)

Grandchildren: (sex, age, residence)

Husband / partner: age;
place of birth;
nationality;
ethnic background;
education;
occupation;
financial resources;
religion;

Mother: age;
place of birth;
nationality;
ethnic background;
education;
occupation;
religion;

Father: age;
place of birth;
nationality;
ethnic background
education;
occupation;
religion;

Siblings: (sex, age domicile)

What name would you like to be called by in this study?

What name would you like your partner to be called in this study?

CONVERSATIONAL QUESTIONAIRE

NAME:

DATE:

1. What was it like for you to speak with me about your experiences?

2. What impact, if any, did the conversation have on you? (e.g., on your thoughts, feelings, ways of looking at things, attitudes, new realizations, behaviour etc.). Please be specific.

3. Do you think you've felt, said, or done anything differently as a result, or partly as a result of our conversation? Please explain.

4. If you were telling a friend about our conversation, would you recommend that she participate? Why or why not?

5. Have you any other comments or suggestions regarding the conversation in light of your experience?